



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



ESSAYS AND SKETCHES
OF
EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.

WORKS OF
EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.

THE POETICAL WORKS OF EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.

Edited by GEORGE FRANCIS ARMSTRONG. A New Edition, containing many Poems not before published. Fcap. 8vo. With Portrait on Steel by C. H. JEENS, and Vignette. Price 5s.

"His young star will continue to shine before the eyes of all who study English poetry."—SAINTE-BEUVE.

ESSAYS AND SKETCHES OF EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.

Edited by GEORGE FRANCIS ARMSTRONG. Fcap. 8vo. Price 5s.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.

Edited by GEORGE FRANCIS ARMSTRONG. Fcap. 8vo. With Portrait and Vignette. Price 7s. 6d.

~~~~~  
LONGMANS AND CO

*Presented to the Library of Edinburgh  
University by Mrs Savage Armstrong*

ESSAYS AND SKETCHES OF

D. 5094

*Mrs Savage Armstrong  
March 1948*

EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.

EDITED BY

GEORGE FRANCIS ARMSTRONG.

LONDON :

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

1877.

[*All rights reserved.*]



ELZEVIR PRESS :—PRINTED BY JOHN C. WILKINS AND VERNON,  
9 CASTLE STREET, CHANCERY LANE.

## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

I COLLECT these essays and fragments of prose-writing, and present them here in print, first, that I myself and the dearest and nearest friends and associates of the Writer may possess them in a durable and accessible shape ; and, next, that all others who can admire in them what of his mind and character they reveal, or can at least derive pleasure from sympathy with the intellectual activity of youth, may know them and enjoy them. I had intended that the collection should form a portion of the volume containing the Author's *Life and Letters*, of which it is the natural complement, and in connection with which it is my hope that it may be read ; but, the latter volume having swelled to unexpected proportions, I publish it, as a matter of convenience, in a separate book.

Few of these prose-pieces were ever meant thus to see the light. One only—that on *Essayists and Essay-Writing*—was printed during the Author's lifetime ; two or three had been circulated in MS.,



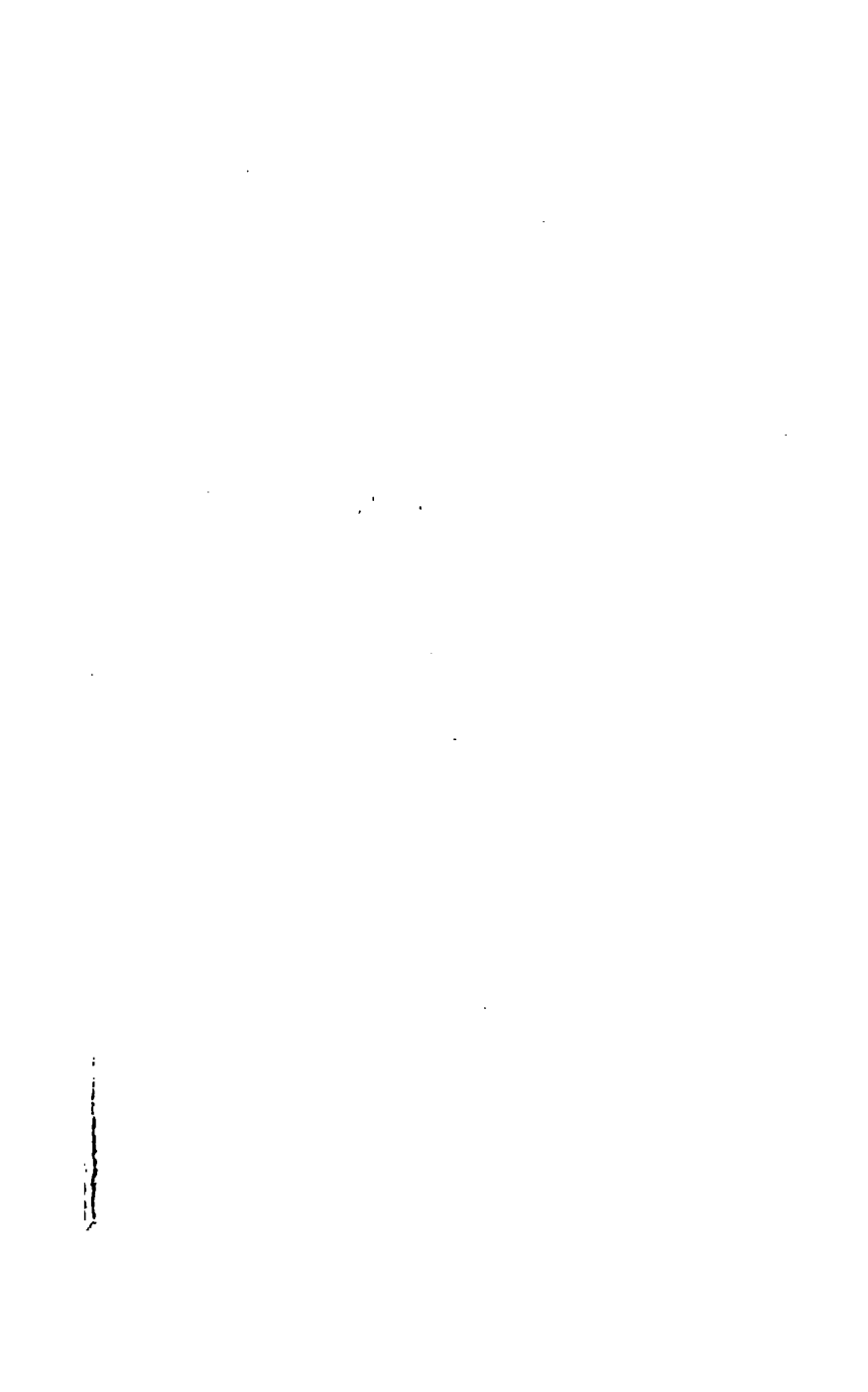


ESSAYS AND SKETCHES  
OF  
EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.



# CONTENTS.

|                                                                        | PAGE |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| PREFACE. . . . .                                                       | v    |
| ESSAYISTS AND ESSAY-WRITING . . . .                                    | i    |
| COLERIDGE . . . . .                                                    | 38   |
| REMARKS ON SOME OF THE CHARACTERS IN WORDS-<br>WORTH'S POEMS . . . . . | 97   |
| SHELLEY. . . . .                                                       | 127  |
| KEATS . . . . .                                                        | 176  |
| TENNYSON . . . . .                                                     | 180  |
| THE CHARACTER OF MEPHISTOPHELES. . . .                                 | 182  |
| EDGAR ALLAN POE . . . . .                                              | 208  |
| LA GERUSALEMME LIBERATA . . . . .                                      | 251  |
| THE STUDY OF POETRY . . . . .                                          | 254  |
| THE SUBJECTIVE ESSAY. . . . .                                          | 257  |
| THE LITERATURE OF IRELAND . . . . .                                    | 259  |
| ORIGINALITY . . . . .                                                  | 262  |
| NOVEL-READING . . . . .                                                | 263  |
| THE MYSTERY OF THE WEIRD LADY . . . .                                  | 270  |
| A PROPHECY . . . . .                                                   | 276  |
| THE IRISH SPORTING-YOUTH . . . . .                                     | 281  |
| YOUTH AND MANHOOD . . . . .                                            | 283  |
| CAVOUR . . . . .                                                       | 284  |
| NON-INTERVENTION . . . . .                                             | 291  |
| TRADES' UNIONS . . . . .                                               | 296  |
| NON-SECTARIAN EDUCATION . . . . .                                      | 303  |



## ESSAYISTS AND ESSAY- WRITING.<sup>1</sup>

THE essay is comparatively a modern phenomenon in literature. In the present day it is mainly represented in the periodicals, many of the best of the more recent volumes of essays being republications from reviews and magazines. These furnish in many cases the readiest access to the literary profession, and hence many of our men of letters have begun their career with essay-writing. On the immense influence of periodical literature upon the age it is unnecessary to dwell. Suffice it to observe, that, if a writer wishes to produce an impression upon that vast abstraction, the Reading Public, he can now effect it by means of an essay, or series of essays, in cases where formerly he would have been obliged to write a book. The power to

<sup>1</sup> For one or two leading thoughts on the ideal of the Essay contained in the following pages, I have to acknowledge my obligations to a paper entitled "Essayists, Old and New," in the *North British Review*.—E. J. A.

produce good essays is, therefore, naturally coveted by most thinking men ; and the practice of literary composition is looked upon as an essential element of a liberal education. . .

Let us not begin by supposing that success in essay-writing is to be won without labour. Far otherwise. For, doubtless, the more numerous and earnest our efforts, the more definitely we shall come to comprehend the fact that essay-writing is an art, and that as a work of art the essay is certain to be judged, whether consciously or unconsciously, by its critics. The limits which distinguish an essay from a treatise (a distinction pointed out by Lord Bacon), render this an absolutely indispensable condition. The smaller the work, the more perfect it must be ; and the flaws which are unheeded in the colossal façade of a Norman cathedral would be unpardonable blemishes in a single piece of sculpture. Diffuseness and digression, however permissible in a larger work, must be resolutely resisted in the essay. An essay which deliberately violates the rules to which it is amenable, whether by incompleteness, disproportion, or otherwise, is fated to produce a feeling of dissatisfaction.<sup>1</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> "An essay-writer must practise in the chemical method, and give the virtue of a full draught in a few drops. . . . It is often expected that every sheet should . . . make out in thought what it wants in bulk ; that a point of humour should be worked up in all its parts ; and a subject touched upon in its

may be presumed that the reader of De Quincey will not experience so high a degree of pure satisfaction as the reader of Macaulay, although De Quincey is in general much more scrupulously accurate than Macaulay; for, notwithstanding that De Quincey's details are polished and elaborated to the last touch of perfection, his essays, taken as wholes, want the organic completeness of Macaulay's. Thus, compare the essay on the Revolt of the Tartars with the essay on Clive, and the difference in this respect is at once perceptible. Both are historical; both are vivacious and eloquent; both are finished to the minutest balancing of periods. But Macaulay satisfies us by his artistic completeness, while De Quincey's reckless disregard of harmonious unity excites our expectations only to disappoint them. Beginning with a flourish of trumpets, he proclaims in loud-sounding exordium that the story he is about to unfold is equal in dramatic interest to *Venice Preserved*, or the *Fiesco*. But, instead of beholding the inner workings of the characters of real men and women laid bare with the power of a good historian (much less of a dramatist like Otway or Schiller), we contemplate something far more nearly resembling the tumultuous visions of a Shelley or a Victor Hugo. It

most essential articles, without the repetitions, tautologies, and enlargements that are indulged to longer labours."—*Spectator* (No. 124).—E. J. A.



has been observed sarcastically of De Quincey that, when treating of a locality in Westmoreland, he brings in the world as a parenthesis and the other planets as foot-notes. Macaulay, on the other hand, subdues all his details to their correct proportions, in relation to the total effect proposed; and so, while perhaps less dazzling than De Quincey in his manœuvres of style, less astonishing in his mastery of words, he is unmistakably the more perfect artist. We may conclude that the essay, being in reality a work of art, is amenable to canons, and will be tried, whether wittingly or unwittingly, by its own laws. And in general it may be pronounced that no essay which is not artistic will prove entirely satisfactory; and that no essay, however trivial may be its subject, will prove wholly unsatisfactory provided that it be artistic.

But, granting that essay-writing is indeed an art, by what process are we to ascertain its principles? Much, truly, may be gained from that observation of the elements of composition which necessarily accompanies its practice. Perhaps the most palpable manifestation of a veteran writer is his skill in the selection of words. His language, according to the memorable distinction of Wordsworth, is no longer the *dress*, but has become the *incarnation*, of his thoughts. He has learned to discriminate between the ready and commonplace and the precise, between the glittering and hollow and the befitting,

in the materials of expression. Without consciously aiming at originality, he has developed for himself a marked individuality of style. Picturesque phraseology no longer captivates him by its delusive charms; the mimic thunder of the rounded period speaks to him no more as the voice of a god, infallible. Doubtless, it is not till after long practice that the writer is able to laugh good-humouredly at the besetting sins of his youth—passionate outbursts of misdirected enthusiasm, mosaics of glaring and ill-assorted colours, the blind headlong rush into paradox, the comical strut in worn-out buskins. It is a hard thing for the inexperienced writer to sacrifice these,—

“in outward show  
Elaborate, of inward less exact.”

Let it be our comfort that it is only natural for youth to be efflorescent. The tree must needs array itself in the fair garniture of blossom before it can load its branches with the wealth of fruitage. The spring for gaiety and show; the autumn for the sombre tints of mellowness and maturity.<sup>1</sup> Yet it is probable that the more numerous a writer's intellectual progeny becomes, the more diffused will be his paternal affection; and the less painful will

<sup>1</sup> This may be regarded as a general law. Among the most eminent exceptions were Lord Bacon and Edmund Burke.—See Macaulay's "Essays," vol. i., p. 412. (Ed. 1860.)—E. J. A.

he find it to obey the harsh mandate of the critic—"Whenever you have written a sentence that appears to you particularly fine, be sure to blot it out!"

On the other hand, the practised writer will carefully guard against an opposite extreme. He will not be suspicious of *all* that glitters, or pronounce it to be alloy before he has proved it. He will by no means forswear every colour that is bright, but only those that are untruthful. While carefully avoiding the turbulent seas of inflation, he will be no less cautious of running aground in the shallows of dulness. In a word, he will aim at combining the vivid with the solid, at uniting in legitimate and judicious fusion the 'dynamical' element of expression with that which is merely 'mechanical.'

Few, likewise, but experienced writers will be masters of the *rhythm* of prose—an exquisite refinement of art, hardly less difficult of attainment than the firm hand and delicate touch of the painter, or that perfectly musical arrangement of syllables which is one of the distinctive marks of the genuine poet. A natural tendency to musical expression will not suffice for this result, any more than the finest appreciation of harmony will in itself guarantee skilful execution upon a difficult instrument. Nothing but continued practice, and the resolute recasting of impracticable sentences, will ever produce this great desideratum. One of the most

thoughtful of English essayists has justly complained of the indifference manifested by British writers to this perfection of style; and it is one thing to value matter more highly than form, but quite another thing to be insensible to manner. Doubtless the thought may be more precious than the expression; but the expression is oftentimes an indispensable concomitant of the thought itself; so that the one is the priceless jewel, the other the casket worthy to contain it, and the "word fitly spoken" is indeed "like apples of gold in pictures of silver." The capabilities of our language for rhythm have in all probability never yet been fully developed. A separate study of this branch of art may evolve many a latent capacity, may evoke many a meaning and effective harmony which has hitherto been suffered to escape unheeded. It is unpardonable that a noble and beautiful thought, itself the very soul of harmony, should be condemned by wilful carelessness to find its utterance in a discord. A strange spectacle indeed if he who is enamoured of Truth should suffer the peerless one to go forth among the throngs of men arrayed in the apparel of a beggar!

But it is obvious that more than practice is required; and the most elaborate code of rules will not supply all that is necessary to success in essay-writing. Quintilian, though he may have moulded, has never made an orator; Aristotle, though he may have assisted many, has never inspired a single poet.

Good judgment, good taste, good feeling, the discrimination which is like a conscience, the observation which never slumbers,—all these attributes, and many more, are required ; but they are not to be purchased of the dealers in rules and systems. Few, indeed, can hope to attain that subtle combination of fine qualities which go to make up the artist of the higher order. Yet, to reach even a creditable mediocrity, the taste must be refined, the imagination must be enriched ; and these ends may be compassed in a great measure by a patient study of those works in literature which are preëminently artistic in conception and in form.

For, what are the conditions of a good essay ? *First*, knowledge of the subject ; *secondly*, proportion in the adjustment of the parts ; *thirdly*, unity and completeness of the whole. Now, putting aside the first of these, a thorough knowledge and strong grasp of the subject—without which we will suppose the construction of a good essay not to be practicable,—how are the second and third conditions to be fulfilled ? He who is blind to the proportion and unity of a great poem, will not be likely to perceive the necessity for these qualities in a minor work of art. The writer who will fail to distinguish between the irregularity of such a work as Schiller's *Robbers* and the flawless symmetry of (let us say) Goethe's *Iphigenia*, is not likely to be over-scrupulous in the grouping of his own illustrations, or the colouring of

his own details, even in the description of a simple event. It by no means follows, indeed, that extensive reading will produce in itself this sense of balance and adjustment ; but, to expect to obtain it without study is vanity, inasmuch as one who has not studied will hardly be conscious of its need. Thus much at least is certain, that in proportion to our realization of the harmonious perfection of the greatest works of art will be our feeling of the imperfection of our own efforts. The higher our ideal, the lower will be our view of our own achievements ; but then the more thorough will be the consciousness of our requirements, and the more successful our strivings after perfection. A painter whose ideal of the sea is sufficiently realized by the Dutch pictures, will rest satisfied with his pitiable work sooner than he who has taken his ideal from the innumerable laughter and billowy confusion of the ocean. A poet whose conceptions of his art are adequately fulfilled by the conceits of Cowley or the apocalyptic ravings of Pollok, will revel in his own imaginary glory much earlier, no doubt, than he who has stood at gaze before the mountain sublimity of Milton, and contemplated, with bated breath and awe-struck heart, the wonder-working versatility of Shakespeare. As with the poet and the painter, so likewise, in a lesser degree, with the essayist. A great ideal, an unerring taste, an even judgment, a power over the imagination which will fuse all things into subservience to his

aim—whatever toil be dedicated to their attainment—must be gained by the essayist for himself. So, of the representative essayists of England, De Quincey, Hazlitt, Carlyle, are devoted students also of poetry and the drama ; while Addison, Goldsmith, Cowley, Dryden, Leigh Hunt, Lamb, Landor, Macaulay, and Henry Taylor, are not only students of poetry, but poets.

An illustration, which will appeal to the experience of many, may bring this truth into a light still more convincing. If we are writing a critique of a great poem, which by long study we have come in some measure to contemplate in the truthful minuteness of its details and in the statuesque magnificence of its entirety, is it at all likely, or even possible, that our appreciation of these excellencies will not produce its influence upon the estimate we form of our own handiwork? He who verily admires the true metaphor of the master, will not be satisfied with a false one, even though it should be the most promising offspring of his own brain. If he truly appreciate, and his eye be practised so as heartily to enjoy, the warm tones and noontide colours of the masterpiece, he will not go off in raptures at the sight of his own most vigorous daubing. If he really and fully conceive the consummate art which gives its meaning to every minutest touch, while it forgets not for a moment the projected effect of the total sum, he

will not mistake his own carelessness for the freedom of genius, or invest his clumsiness with a halo of self-complacency, and set it down as the boldness and massiveness of a mighty vision.

But in this art of essay-writing we are not left wholly to the difficult process of analogy. We have always at our command, in our own language, a large variety of the worthiest models. From the primitive gravity of Bacon to the polished smartness of the most recent magazine, the range is broad and varied, the field for study fertile and profitable. The essay has become portion and parcel of the literature of England, and on the rugged but solid foundations of the past has been slowly built an edifice gorgeous and stately. Nay, rather, the English essay is a literature in itself—in miniature, we grant, yet with all the special features of a literature, exquisitely moulded and fairly turned.<sup>1</sup> Embracing, too, a motley company upon a goodly stage; Wisdom slowly dropping the ponderous aphorism, and Knowledge astonishing us with allusions which seem to be the mockings of an unknown tongue; Folly jingling the bells in his cap, and flinging forth his merry quips

<sup>1</sup> Thus we have the Essay-Poem (Charles Lamb), the Essay-Drama (Walter Savage Landor), the Essay-History (Macaulay), the Essay-Criticism (Jeffrey, Hazlitt, &c.), the Essay-Philosophy (Hamilton and Mill), the Essay-Novel (Thackeray), &c.—E. J. A.



and quirks ; Sentimentalism languishing in costless sighs, and Sorrow weeping no false tears ; and (powerful and distinct through all, though mingling with all and hallowing it) Imagination's deep immortal voice, like the solemn music of a cathedral bell, heard amid the city's clash and din. It might be said, that if all the rest of our literature were to perish, and only the writings of the British essayists to survive, yet would England's intellectual greatness stand the shock ; so ample their scope, so copious their variety, so great and truthful the conceptions they enshrine. Sir E. Bulwer-Lytton, recognizing the fulness and glory of the English essay, has not scrupled to classify the works of the master-essayists according to the principles applied to the greatest of the arts ;—the objective, corresponding to the epical in poetry, and represented by Addison in his series of papers on *The Pleasures of the Imagination* ; the subjective, which has its counterpart in the lyrical poem, and in which Charles Lamb stands without a rival ; and, lastly, the mixed, comprehending both, and founded by Lord Bacon. The division, though not purporting to be scientifically accurate, is based upon a recognition of the dignity of the art, and may assist considerably in its study.

My limits, as well as the formidable nature of the subject, warn me back from the perilous undertaking of a review of the English essayists. I shall,

therefore, merely select a few of the most notable, and, keeping in view the purpose with which we started, I shall endeavour to collect their principal characteristics. Let us group them, for convenience, into three periods—the Age of Queen Anne, the Georgian Age, and the Victorian Age. I take, as representatives of the first period, Addison and Steele; of the second, Goldsmith, Hazlitt, Lamb; of the third, De Quincey, Macaulay, Carlyle, Helps, and Henry Taylor.<sup>1</sup>

It is much to be regretted that Addison and Steele are no more so familiar to the public as they used to be in the days of our fathers. *The Spectator* and *The Tatler* are heavy reading in comparison with the contents of Mudie's bookshelves; but they are most invaluable studies, for purity of style, for exquisite touches of satirical humour, and as a faithful reflex of the times in which they were written. As models, their importance can hardly

<sup>1</sup> This is the most obvious chronological classification. It has been adopted, as I have said, for the sake of convenience. Addison and Goldsmith, it has been suggested, both living in the same century and both before the great landmark of the French Revolution, were in reality much nearer to one another than Goldsmith and Lamb. In a literary point of view also they were nearer. On the other hand, Hazlitt, Lamb, and De Quincey were truly contemporaries, living under the same social conditions, and under the influence of the same great ideas, and being, moreover, personal friends.  
—E. J. A.

be overrated. They combine some of the highest excellencies of manner,—purity without dilution, satire without scurrility, humour without buffoonery, the noblest principle without the obtrusiveness of preaching. Mr. Matthew Arnold, indeed, detects in the ideas of Addison what he terms “the note of provinciality;” but he takes no exception against his style, which is urbanity itself. Pity if these works should become as virtually obsolete with the general class of readers as the dialogues in *Rasselas*, or the concluding cantos of the *Faerie Queene*! Pity if Sir Roger de Coverley and Will Honeycomb, Sir Andrew Freeport and Isaac Bickerstaff, should ever be hustled into comparative obscurity by the host of modern claimants!

If, however, the essays of Goldsmith are seldom read, it is because they are among the least precious of his works. They are thrown into eclipse by his poems, his comedies, and his simple and delightful novel. They are, still, an admirable study for the writer of essays, and this for several reasons. They hold a middle place between the writings of Addison and those of Charles Lamb. Without the formal elegance of the *Spectator*, without the frolicsome quaintness of the gentle Elia, they have all the ease, all the pliancy, all the blithe good-humour of both. These three writers have indeed surmounted one of the least accessible of the moral heights of literature. They have attained effective-

ness of satire without the sacrifice of kindness. Goldsmith is never rude, trenchant, or coldly brilliant. His laughter is the laughter of goodnature. There is no harsh discord in it ; no note of challenge, insult, or provocation. His essays seem to be all that he could have wished his conversation to have been. They are, moreover, essentially characteristic ; and few will rise from the perusal of them without renewed admiration of the good qualities of head and heart which have won the merited esteem of posterity for the honest, open-minded, genial Oliver Goldsmith.

The study of Hazlitt is not so pleasing. It is even to some extent melancholy. Querulous and petulant, passionate and fretful, he seems always eagerly struggling after some ideal excellence which he never finds, and, in the bitterness of disappointment, he vents his spleen upon surrounding circumstances. This writer is commonly very inadequately appreciated. True, he appears to be hardly capable of taking more than a single view of most of the subjects he deals with. Consequently, he is seldom moderate in his judgments ; very often in extremes. Yet it is easy to see that he is thoroughly in earnest. You never detect him dallying or trifling. He palters not in anywise with the truths which he believes in. Hence there is a resolute force and rugged power in every sentence he has written. In his essays there is

much of a poet's rapture and whirl of soul ; indeed, much more of the fervour and fine frenzy of the poet than of the scientific calmness of the critical surgeon. A man of deep passion and strong imagination, he is by his very nature prone to exaggerate. Yet we pardon the involuntary falsehood for the eagerness after truth. It would be ridiculous to expect rigid mathematical fidelity from one of "such impetuous blood," thrilled to his very heart of hearts by the sentiments he is criticising, stirred to the inmost depths of his being by the beauty he would fain persuade us he is analyzing. William Hazlitt was violent ; immoderate ; at times, let it be granted, even scurrilous ; yet he yearned intensely after ideal perfection, his eye was rich in all poetic beauty, his spirit revelled in the great world of imagination which lay around him in the creations of his favourite bards ; and it was little marvel if he projected upon actual life the shadows of those gigantic passions and clouds of spiritual gloom. His essays are most to be valued, perhaps, for their extraordinary vividness of style ; an energy which places the conceptions before the reader's eye in life-like distinctness of outline ; a rich prodigality, rather than faithful accuracy, of illustration ; the eloquence of nervous boldness rather than modulated flow. He is never dull ; perpetually urged on by a sleepless intellectual activity. This more than atones for his dis-

regard of finish ; and thus his essays can be said to be artistic, as pictures of Salvator and Rembrandt are which are confessedly deficient in accuracy. Every page sparkles ; though its sparkle is certainly not that of the curiously cut and scrupulously polished jewel, but rather of the rough and heavy ore. He is more studious of his effects than of the means employed to produce them ; and although this may seem but negative praise, nevertheless the effects are there, bold, rapid, and surprising. I would especially notice his essay *On a Sun-Dial* and that *On the Conversation of Lords*, as peculiarly indicating the character of his mind—earnest and vehement, and withal sombre, as the cloud charged with the lightning ; yet, as the cloud often fringed with the deep crimson of sunset, so also at times rich and warm, and toned with inexpressible softness. Rather let us say, a wreck, storm-buffed, and torn by the pitiless waves ; yet, as it plunges in the ocean-trough, and reels darkly to and fro, we see by glimpses the stateliness of naked mast and shattered prow, and commiserate the beauty and the grace of its forlorn majesty.

The *Essays of Elia* are, I think, a conclusive proof of the theory I have already stated,—that it matters not how commonplace the subject treated may be, if only the essay itself fulfil the conditions of a work of art. Lamb deals only with the or-

dinary world of his own every-day life ; yet he throws a sunshine upon everything he approaches. His style has none of the breadth and volume of the river, flowing with full sound between its stately banks ; it leaps, and chatters, and dashes, and sparkles, like the little wilful brook amidst the hills. It is perfectly inimitable, as it is essentially characteristic of the man. Its pleasant quaintness is not affectation ; it is the natural utterance of a mind which has brooded habitually over the old literature of England, and found therein its most congenial resting-place. It is as though a man should go into a distant province, and unconsciously assume the accent of its inhabitants. Sir Thomas Browne and Izaak Walton, Margaret of Newcastle, and Drayton, and Marlowe, were dearer to him than the most conspicuous names of his day.<sup>1</sup> His delight was in sauntering through the noisy thoroughfares of city-life,—a spectator, not an actor ; fluttering about old bookstalls ; catching strange glimpses of human mirth and woe ; now stammering out an innocent pun in the green-room of “Imperial Drury ;” anon lounging in meditative calm on the terrace of the Inner Temple. He is, we grant you, an arrant, incorrigible trifler ; but his gaiety has a touch of sadness in it. His humour is a fine pathetic humour, with nothing in it boisterous or clownish. It is always the intellec-

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth and Coleridge excepted.—E. J. A.

tual playfulness of the gentle student and thoughtful gentleman ; with much of the pathetic fallacy of Shakespeare's Jaques, much of the mournful sweetness of Wordsworth's Matthew. There is sympathy and sorrow underneath all that merriment of lip and brow, as he describes the poverty-stricken home of that most hearty and hospitable of half-pay officers, the divine alchemy of whose imagination converts plated spoons into silver sugar-tongs and meagre ale into the generous Madeira ! Sympathy and sorrow under it all ! The special charm of Charles Lamb is the irresistible magic whereby he transports his readers to that debatable territory between laughter and tears, and holds them there for moments together. The most notable fact about his genius is his persistent habit of seeing something beautiful and true in everything, and making us see it too. The hard-working clerks of the South-Sea House become our delightful companions while we read. The sooty faces of young chimney-sweepers are illumined with a peculiar sanctity, and we confess a kindly yearning towards those "innocent blacknesses." Street mendicants are glorified into a touching sublimity ; and even the Quakers' Meeting becomes entertaining beneath the rod of this enchanter. Let it not be said that these essays are too spontaneous, too emotional, too evanescent in their spirit, to be called artistic. On the contrary, in their apparent



artlessness lies the secret of their art,—as the indefinable *abandon* of Heine's lyrics, or the all-subtle witchery of the music of Mendelssohn.<sup>1</sup>

Passing on to the Victorian Age, we are met among the first by Thomas de Quincey. To his essays I have already briefly adverted. If he is one of the cleverest, he is likewise one of the most irregular, of the English essayists. His style is a miracle of ingenuity; his English is of the purest; his eloquence rises at times to sublimity; his fun is irresistible; his logical subtlety amazing. Around the barest prosaic facts he flings, as it were, a mantle of imperial purple. Grand, above all, is the

<sup>1</sup> I extract from an article contributed by the Author to the *Reader* of February 11, 1865, a few more sentences on Lamb, which might well take their place in the body of this essay:—

“Lamb is intensely elaborate, with his subtle involutions of quaint ideas, and the magic effects that glint forth from his quaint words and phrases, fetched from antiquated tomes. . . The essay on ‘All Fools’ Day’ reads like a speech from one of Shakespeare’s clowns, with a nineteenth-century education; ‘Dream Children’ is wrought with all the tremulous delicacy of a song of Heine—changing suddenly into sad reality, like many a sweet song in the ‘Reisebilder;’ and, not to multiply instances, who will deny the perfect art of the ‘Popular Fallacies,’ where so much wit and wisdom is so wondrously contained within so narrow a space? Lamb, in truth, was a great artist, and might almost be ranked in the same class with the subjective lyrists. His essays will always be read with pleasure, because they are the product of fine genius, and of laborious and incommunicable thought.”—ED.

force of his more impassioned narrative. His descriptions of rapid movement are like the battles of Tasso; we see the flashing eyeballs; we see the whirl of the swords and the lightning of the lances hurled in the sunbeam; we hear the brattling of the trumpets and the thunder of the war-steeds' hoofs; we hear the fierce cries of the warriors, and the clashing of the blows on the burganets of steel. Miltonic, in their magnificence of imagery and pomp and luxury of language, are his visions; an imagery tropical in its splendour; a language rhythmical and lucid in the boldest flights of an imagination that spurned restriction—rich organ-music of solemn diapason and voluptuous treble, wild, manifold, tortuously blended, yet moving within the bounds of law. Still, with all his excellencies, and they are countless, he seldom produces a work which presents the appearance of wholeness. The reader is too frequently annoyed by unnecessary digressions, leading (apparently) anywhere but to the point at issue. The essay on *Murder, as One of the Fine Arts* is one of the least exceptionable; yet even this cannot be entirely acquitted of the charge of diffuseness. There is, perhaps, hardly any collection of essays from which we may obtain more valuable hints and curious information; and yet there is none, perhaps, from which it would be more injudicious to select our models for imitation. "Irregularity and

want of method," says the Spectator, "are only supportable in men of great learning or genius, who are often too full to be exact, and therefore choose to throw down their pearls in heaps before the reader, rather than be at the pains of stringing them."<sup>1</sup>

It is not easy to speak with moderation of the essays of Lord Macaulay. They are universally

<sup>1</sup> Here again a supplementary extract may be taken from the article quoted in the note on p. 20 :—

"Let us take up one of De Quincey's fifteen volumes, and we shall see there a man of rare genius, extraordinary culture, and most curious and piercing intellect, expending vast energies on the accuracy, the rhythm, and the beauty of his style in essay-writing, to which branch of literary production he may be said to have almost exclusively devoted himself. Archbishop Trench, a high authority on these points, has pronounced an opinion in one of his essays on philology, long since, that Thomas De Quincey is the most perfect master of the English language among recent authors. And indeed much of what he has written is so exact, so even, so melodious, that it reads more like Greek than the loose, inaccurate, unrhythmical writing which we are often obliged to call 'good English,' for hopeless lack of better. In detail De Quincey's essays are perfect ; imperfect as wholes. He wanders about into countless and intricate by-ways of thought, like a truant schoolboy. Sometimes, too, your by-way proves, to all intents, a *cul-de-sac*. Should he happen to espy an innocent little pleasantry, he hunts it, and plays with it, till he has worried it to death. In fact, when he nicknamed Herder and Coleridge 'men of infinite title-pages,' it might have been retorted upon De Quincey that he was 'a man of infinite digressions.'"—ED.

studied and universally admired, and doubtless they will always rank high among the classics of our language. As works of art they are perhaps perfect in their kind ; but, if they are to be adopted as models, let it be in spirit, not in letter. There is no style the mere trick of which it is easier to imitate ; there is no style the imitation of which is easier of detection. Lord Macaulay was a powerful master of antithesis—or, rather, antithesis was a powerful master of Lord Macaulay ; for it must be admitted that he has been tempted more than once or twice into error of thought by this most treacherous mannerism. As a general rule, there is nothing more suspicious in rhetoric than a fair-sounding antithesis, nothing more likely to contain an exaggeration on one side or the other, nothing more liable to dazzle the writer and to mislead the reader. The antithesis is a figure of speech indicating combinations of ideas for which there are but few archetypes in reality. It would be difficult, to say the least, for an accomplished logician to produce a page of antitheses which would bear a rigid scrutiny. It has been well remarked that in describing character no method could be selected which is more fallacious.<sup>1</sup> Far different is the manner in which the characters of Carlyle are

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the article in the *North British Review* to which the author has already acknowledged himself indebted for several valuable suggestions.—ED.

thrown before us, with their subtle involutions and infinite complexities, light and shadow blending imperceptibly, an incommunicable mystery ever baffling, ever perplexing us, a deep central silence beneath the laughter and the tears. Masterly in the analysis of character Macaulay may be or he may not; but undoubtedly he has imparted to it an air of falseness in many places by yielding to the seductions of his favourite figure. Let any person read his character of Samuel Johnson immediately after reading Mr. Carlyle's, and pronounce which of the two is artificial and which is natural, which is epigrammatic and which is dramatic. But if a writer of so great genius as Lord Macaulay has been misled by his passion for antithesis, the inference is at once obvious and conclusive.

To the writer whose imagination is more vigorous than his reason, the study of these essays may furnish an important lesson. They may show him that great perfection of style is not incompatible with rigid severity of taste; that it is quite possible to attain energy of expression by means of the simplest and purest idiomatic language. Lord Macaulay is always forcible, and generally so without the slightest appearance of turgidity. His essays are the severest comment upon those who are not satisfied with their mode of expression till they have wrought themselves up to a dithyrambic frenzy, who invoke the aid of the whirlwind and

•

the earthquake to convey the most obvious platitudes, and who seem to consider a state of violent hysteria to be the normal condition of the inspired rhetorician. In the chaste dignity and graceful strength of this great writer let those read their condemnation who cannot recognize tranquil fervour, nor any earnestness apart from spasm ; confounding rhetoric with ranting ; disbelieving in passion if it be not torn to rags.

If it be difficult to take a moderate estimate of the essays of Lord Macaulay, it is still more so to form a just opinion of the merits and defects of the writings of Mr. Carlyle. Nothing is more common than to hear it said that his style is an unintelligible jargon, an amorphous conglomeration of mannerisms. Now, while there is some truth in this judgment, there is much also that is false. Let us take up a single page of his writings, and study it. We find it to be characterized by a profusion of metaphor. Nay, almost every sentence assumes this form. Yet it would be no less impossible to affect this, than it would be to affect great imaginative powers ; for without a large endowment of the poetic faculty, a metaphorical style will never be attained. It demands insight, breadth of vision, genuine fancy and imagination. Nor is metaphor necessarily the language of poetry and oratory alone. It has been finely remarked by a shrewd philosophical thinker that "there are sub-

jects the truth of which can never be so well brought out as by the aid of metaphor. Metaphors give body and circumstance to things which could not be adequately represented if discussed in cold though precise terms." So far, then, as this central peculiarity of his style is concerned, it would seem to be the result of an opulent imagination, confirmed by deliberate choice.

Again, let it be considered that, although we may catch stray cadences of his manner here and there in the writings of many eminent authors of the day, yet the style of Mr. Carlyle baffles imitation. The reason would seem to be, that there is in it—as we have seen in the *Essays of Elia*—something which is peculiarly the man's own, and part of his character. If we omit the consideration of the mere outward fashion of the expressions, which is lawless and eccentric, the quality which mainly individualizes his style is its subtle and all-comprehensive humour.<sup>1</sup> Without doubt it is this deep-seated humour which is the source of those strange vivid combinations and curious analogies, which, however they may startle and offend the formal taste, appeal irresistibly to the mass of readers, and, "coming home to men's business and

<sup>1</sup> "It is difficult to sound the depths of some men's humour, the deepest part of their nature."—*Companions of my Solitude*, p. 196.—E. J. A.

bosoms," delight at once by their force, and truthfulness, and genial breadth.

Those who will not tolerate his style, nor sympathize altogether with his views, must yet feel the power of that earnestness and unity of purpose which is the undertone of all that he has written. The voice of one crying in the wilderness; the fervent pleading of a spirit with spirits; the eager eye ever piercing beyond the external, and seeing all finite things in their relation to the infinite; the strong heart and resolute hand, ever warm and ever helpful; the sombre sadness and calm seriousness of "one who feels the immeasurable world." Earth to his vision is the little sphere of light and shade reposing in the bosom of the Infinite. The things of Earth are transient, perishable; the feeling of Eternity is absorbing and unconquerable. And this is the message he proclaims to us: The Spirit of the Age is sordid and mechanical; the worship of gold, and of labour as the means sanctified to this end, is fast becoming the only universal religion. "Labour for the meat which perisheth!" Such is the gospel proclaimed in the streets of the world of our day. "Let every man studiously set himself to become, so far as possible, a machine; let him endeavour by all the means in his power to stifle sentiment, to starve his feelings, to reduce, in fact, his humanity to its lowest terms. Everything must be dull, flat, intensely prosaic. Every angle must



be rubbed down, that the whole race may 'merge in form and gloss the picturesque of man in man.' The social system is a system of machinery: it is not in the nature of things that wheels and pistons should be endowed with will, thought, feeling, or religion." Against such degrading economies peal the earnest warnings of the deepest thinkers of the age. To reveal the truth in all its nakedness was high duty and great privilege. To this end Ruskin preaches. To this end Kingsley romances. To this end Tennyson and Browning sing. To this end also the great essayist consecrates a not less powerful art.<sup>1</sup>

Among the ripest products of modern wisdom are the essays of Mr. Helps and of Mr. Henry Taylor. The author of *Friends in Council* has adopted the pleasant and useful device of setting his essays in a framework of dramatic conversation. The subject is thus presented from many different points of view, and the reader enjoys the benefit of getting round it and over it and under it, so to speak. The style of Mr. Helps is a fine example of sobriety and solidity. Everything rank and luxuriant is carefully pruned away; every beautiful flower and fruit of thought and language is carefully developed to perfection. If the essays want freedom, and the bold vivacious rapidity of a more impassioned rhetoric,

<sup>1</sup> See also a short piece, entitled "A Prophecy," by John Stuart Mill. (*Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. I.)—E. J. A.

the want is amply compensated by weighty judgment, solid sense, and deep inward harmony of temper. There is no mouthing, no bravura, no glittering trumpery. On the other hand, if the style is somewhat heavy, the essays are short, and the heaviness is that of concentrated meaning, not of wearisome prolixity. Moreover, they are wrought artistically; the language seems to fit the thought exactly; and many of the sentences are so well rounded off that they may be detached as separate aphorisms, and often fix themselves in the memory like the epigrams of a poet. This is manifestly a result only to be obtained by much labour and concentration; for, to declaim is easy; to say exactly as much as should be said, and to say it well, is no light task.

Mr. Henry Taylor is a dramatist and a poet as well as one of the most perfect essayists of our time. The reading of his essays might be compared to gazing into the smoothness of a lake among the mountains, wherein the thunder-blasted crags, and the weird trees that have wrestled with the storm, are reflected, tranquil and beautiful, in the calm depths. Very calm and very deep is his wisdom. You read, and fancy you are listening to the discourse of some aged seer on whose face the lines graven of suffering have become softened and beautified by time. The style is altogether free from the crispness and pertness of modern writing. It

expands into long and rhythmical sentences, rich in a subtle music that recalls the cadences of the *Religio Medici*, or the full-flowing melody of the later essays of Bacon. To a philosopher's amplitude of thought is added a poet's imperial affluence of imagination. Nor does the imagination in any wise encumber the thought, but clothes it rather in a royal garb, imparting to it majesty and grace, never impeding the freedom of its movement. Sensational licence there is none; nor any attitudes and postures to captivate the popular eye. Every sentence is an example of the virtue of self-restraint, one of the hardest virtues to cultivate, in literature as in daily life. If there be any who is disposed to look with self-indulgent eye upon the riot and fever of a youthful imagination, let such an one study the essays of Henry Taylor, in which imagination occupies its fitting place, as the chaste and beautiful spouse of reason.

I have not spoken of Lord Bacon, of Sir Thomas Browne, of Abraham Cowley, of Dryden, of Temple. I have been obliged to pass over without notice the essays of Johnson, of Jeffrey, of Foster, of Coleridge, of Thackeray, of Dickens, of many others of our own and of preceding eras. But from the examples which I have selected may be deduced the fundamental rules of the art of essay-writing, of which the principal are three. *First*, the essayist must work artistically, and with an artistic conception.


*Secondly*, more zealously even than the writer of fiction, he must aim at attractiveness of style. *Lastly*, while studying the masterpieces of his art for the deduction of general principles, he must slavishly copy none, but evolve his productions from his own mind, and stamp them inalienably as his own.

It will readily be conceded that such a composition as the essay cannot be expected to exhaust its subject, its limits being narrow, and its success depending very much upon the adoption of a popular and readable style. It will follow that one essential object of the essay is to suggest as much as possible in connection with its subject. Thus considered, it is a sort of cicerone to literature, history, and science; a gossiping companion, fluent rather than profound, but eminently useful in directing us through the labyrinths of knowledge, and encouraging us by splendid stories and romantic dreams for the cheerless voyages through which oftentimes the more solid learning can alone be reached.

But it is essential also that the essay should please. It demands, therefore, a concentration of the writer's intellectual energy and vivacity. Periods must be scrupulously finished; paragraphs must be carefully wound up to a climax. Tediousness and dullness, however logical, must be renounced as firmly as the pomps and vanities of vapid declamation. Of all the forms of prose-composition, this demands the

highest finish. Men do not take up a volume of essays in the same state of intellectual tension with which they plunge into the *Principia* of Newton or the Sermons of Butler. They go to the essayist for pleasure and relaxation as much as for information, or more.

In addition to these objects let us bear in mind a third, which may be thought accidental, but which ought to be essential. The best essays, the durable and the substantial, will more than please. They will elevate and ennoble, they will in some measure *edify*. The great essayist will not be satisfied merely to convey a certain number of ideas. Assuredly *his* work will be permeated by such influences, tangible or subtle, as will conduce to our moral health and happiness, even as the manifold agencies of the external world combine for our physical well-being. In this sense, indeed, all the highest art, all the highest literature, is didactic. Not necessarily didactic in form. A landscape-picture, a group in marble, a lyric, may teach us indirectly, as visible nature may. Not for no other purpose than to gratify our sense do the vernal woods quiver beneath the breath of the morning, or the starry choirs wheel in their mystic labyrinthine dance. This burthen we hear reiterated in solemn and prophet-like tones from many quarters now. Carlyle preaches earnestly of an "open Secret of Nature," a "Divine Idea, that which lies at the bottom of Appearance;" and



Ruskin has translated the oracle into plainer words. But if, in the quaint language of one of our elder writers, we may "suck divinity from the flowers of nature," yet must it be admitted that the teaching of nature is in general indirect. So likewise in general must be the teaching of art, which is at best nature becoming conscious of itself, and seeking a higher, a voluntary and self-superintending life, in man. Now, it will be found that the worth of the essay, as of the poem or the picture, will be ultimately estimated by this high standard. That the works of our greatest essayists are in accordance with this fundamental principle, would seem to need no proof. Many and great, imperishable and sublime, are the truths they have bequeathed to us. Never shall it be said that the mighty-voiced essayists of England have swept the chords of their golden lyres only to ravish the ear with a momentary sweetness, only to reveal the splendour and the harmonies of their own richly-dowered minds. Not for this did Coleridge, spurning the delights of a dearer art, consent to live laborious days in the effort to popularize the abstruse results of metaphysical research. Not for this did Addison direct his polished scorn against the vices and frivolities of an artificial and decrepit age.

"Essays," writes De Quincey, "must have their value measured by two separate questions. A.—What is the problem, and of what rank in dignity or in use, which the essay undertakes? And next,

that point being settled,—B.—What is the success obtained? And (as a separate question) what is the executive ability displayed in the solution of the problem?—The latter of these tests relates to the principles of essay-writing; the former clearly indicates the object of the essay. The problem to be solved, or (more clearly) the subject to be handled, must involve a degree of use, (for there is no true dignity without usefulness); otherwise the essay will be ultimately valued by the scholar as a literary curiosity, by the world as so much type, paper, and binding. Thus, there may be three orders of essayists:—those who possess great executive ability, but who employ it without conscience or definite aim; those who work conscientiously, but whose executive ability is small; and those who combine great ability with high purpose, making the former subservient to the latter.

The solution of difficult problems, the elaborate demonstration of important theorems, hardly fall within the province of the essay. These rather constitute the special domain of the treatise. The essay is a bark of lighter build, and will not safely bear the costly treasures entrusted to the ponderous argosy; being—in the oft-quoted words of Fuller—“lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, it can turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds,” while the former is “built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in its performances.” It is

the connecting medium between the Literature of Pleasure and the Literature of Science, and unites within itself some of the best elements of both. It follows that the true conception of the essay is this :—a species of composition designed to impart knowledge through the immediate agency of pleasure, to the utmost extent of the capability of the subject. Both these aims must be kept steadily in view, or the work will not be, properly speaking, an essay. It will either turn out a heavy and laborious treatise, or a brilliant piece of trifling,—a splendid exhibition of rhetorical antics, entertaining, it may be, but useless.

Yet, if the essay may not grapple vigorously with the moot-points of philosophy or assign the laws and limits of science, its function is still a noble one. To beguile the hour stolen from toil or pleasure, the single hour which may not be devoted to painful thought or painful study, with a sense of high intellectual enjoyment, and at the same time to leave behind it a sense of something learnt which is not ephemeral,—this is the true function of the essay ; this it can do, if nothing more. A good essay, if it may not furnish us with a ready-made religion, or an invulnerable panoply of political opinions, will yet at least communicate an impulse to some train of thought which may lead us on to valuable conclusions. In these times of hurry and perpetual turmoil, many can find neither the



patience nor the leisure for much literature of any other kind. A solemn duty, therefore, devolves upon the essayist of our day. More perhaps than poet or philosopher, it is he who is now the immediate teacher of the masses; it is he who moulds public opinion, who directs the currents of popular thought; he it is who "presides at the distribution of literary fame;" who, more than any other, holds at his disposal the crowns of the monarchy of mind, deposing one, while he exalts another. He is almost the only prophet to whose voice the sons of toil have time to listen. His wisdom, costing little, and compressed into the smallest and most convenient shape, circulates "like the copper currency" among the multitudes, for whose daily needs the more precious coinage is found to be as impracticable as the iron bars of Lycurgus. The poet sings one stately song, and lapses into silence for the space of a lustrum. The philosopher takes many years to pile up his massive fabrics of thought. The historian rests his fame upon a few great works, the result of a life's labour and research. But the essayist is always in the eye of the public. His influence is immediate; it may be continuous and lifelong. He lays the phantoms which allure or appal the minds of men from time to time, and secures attention and interest by doing battle with the questions of the moment. He, alone of men of letters, may come before the public again and again

as the busy days fly past, warning, cheering, reproving, solacing, until he is regarded as counsellor and friend at the hearths and homes of his countrymen. Therefore his responsibility is grave. Therefore his motive should be pure and honourable. Therefore he should trample underfoot the selfish meanness of ambition, and rise, in the humility of honest endeavour, superior to the love of popular applause. Otherwise, his labour is but vain. Otherwise, the fruit of his toil will turn to ashes upon his lips. But happy, indeed, will he be, if, from his first infantine struggles to command a perfect utterance, even till he attain to the full music and rhythmic law of his maturer words, he can recognize, throughout, one high purpose, to which, he has dedicated his toilsome years ; a purpose from which he has never swerved, to which his allegiance has been ever firm ; a great purpose, which, over perilous and changeful seas that are whirled into many an eddying gulf, and lashed into foam by oft-recurring storm, has ever shone like a bright star, to light him in the gloom, to cheer him in the danger, to beacon him to the abodes that are immortal.

## COLERIDGE.

“There is the love of the good for the good’s sake, and the love of the truth for the truth’s sake.”—COLERIDGE’S *Table Talk*, p. 135.

THE name of Samuel Taylor Coleridge is associated with many different interests in the minds of his various readers. By the lover of poetry he is generally thought of as the author of *Christabel* and the *Ancient Mariner*. By the student of general literature he is remembered for his lectures on Shakespeare and the Elizabethan dramatists. By the metaphysician, the politician, the theologian, he is regarded as the subtle reasoner and imaginative philosopher of *The Friend*, the dissertation on *Church and State*, and the *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*. But by all alike he is, and ever will be, venerated as a man of note, an earnest man, a man of splendid acquisitions and extraordinary genius.

It is not the purpose of this sketch to indulge overmuch in the technicalities of criticism, or the balancing of arguments in the metaphysician’s infinitesimal scales. Rather let us here contemplate as a *man* the brother of Wordsworth, the

friend of Southey, the admired of De Quincey, the beloved of Lamb. A singular spectacle truly, and fraught with deepest significance, was the life of this great poet and philosopher. A youth rapturous and tumultuous ; a manhood stormy and wild ; in middle-age reeling and staggering darkly, like a helmless bark, amidst the perils of unfathomed deeps ; yet, withal, steadfast from first to last in one solemn purpose, often clouded, but never lost. It is indeed the life of one who lived not for himself or for his own age, but for Eternity and the Eternal.

Many men of genius have suffered oblivion to absorb their relation with the Infinite, and have laboured for fame, forgetful of nobler aims. Not so Coleridge. Never was there a man more completely incapable of ambition. Among the few who have consecrated the powers of transcendent intellect and comprehensive genius to the most solemn of all services, who have worshipped day and night in the universal temple of the Maker's praise,—high-priests and prophets, apostles, preachers,—among these we hesitate not to name the man to whom truth was more precious than applause, to whom singleness of aim was life itself ; the man who, amidst all the tumults of humanity, preserved a central calm, a spirit unchanged in the heat of conflict as in the rapture of success.

Born amid the mountains and moorlands of Southern Devon, we may be sure that the mind of

the boy was early impressed with images of solitude and grandeur. But of the childish days of Coleridge we possess unfortunately little record; and most of what we do know has been gathered from memorials of his own conversation—shells and weeds tossed up from that vast and wondrous sea. Of his mother we know absolutely nothing, except that she persecuted him<sup>1</sup> for some reason undiscoverable or at least undiscovered. Of his father we know only that he was a gentle, God-fearing clergyman; ludicrously ignorant of the world and its ways, yet erudite in Hebrew and the Humanities; and withal a very miracle of eccentricity. Mr. Gillman relates that Coleridge always spoke of him as a sort of Parson Adams, and seemed to take a fond pleasure in repeating anecdotes of his peculiarities. These stories have been told often enough already; and it would be an unpardonable presumption to detail them after De Quincey. They are exceedingly amusing, considered separately. In connection with the character of the poet, they are interesting, as they exhibit the same extraordinary absence of mind in the case of the father that so often marked the deportment of the son. The famous story of the learned theologian's mistake at the bishop's dinner-table, when he stowed away in the

<sup>1</sup> According to De Quincey. But see Coleridge's third letter to his friend Mr. Poole, in the supplement to the "*Biographia Literaria*."—E. J. A.

capacious receptacles of his habiliments the snowy folds of a lady's gown, under the impression that he was operating upon his own indecorous and impracticable shirt, has been told with admirable humour by De Quincey.<sup>1</sup> I suspect there is a good deal of the reflected mirth of Coleridge himself in the narrative.

While Coleridge was yet a child, both parents died, and the orphan was removed to London and placed at Christ's Hospital through the kindness of an influential friend. Here he dreamed, and read prodigiously, but erratically ; seldom joining his schoolfellows at play, and for a long time paying little attention to the barren drudgery of a schoolboy's duties. He had, he says, "all the simplicity, all the docility of the little child, but none of the child's habits." Consequently he was severely treated by his masters. Schoolmasters are seldom psychologists, seldom appreciate or take into consideration the subtle shades and distinctions of the characters of boys ; and Dr. Bowyer (*plagosus Orbilius*) was not the man to believe readily in any excellence outside the narrow precincts of his curriculum. He never recognized anything remarkable in the boy-poet beyond "his ugly face" till he had made himself by his own exertions Deputy-Grecian of the school. Coleridge appears to have venerated the memory of the

<sup>1</sup> "Autobiographic Sketches," 2nd vol. of De Quincey's Works. Author's Edition.—E. J. A.

learned pedagogue for having taught him scrupulosity in classical composition, and for having flogged him out of a puerile conceit of infidelity. He certainly laid the foundations of Coleridge's splendid acquirements; but, beyond intellectual culture, he appears to have done little or nothing for his pupil. However, before leaving the Blue-Coat School for Jesus College, Cambridge, the young Coleridge had translated the Hymns of Synesius into English Anacreontics, had devoured the contents of an extensive lending-library, and formed the acquaintance of Leigh Hunt and Charles Lamb, both schoolfellows, who were destined to high literary distinction in after life. To Lamb we owe a memorable picture of Coleridge's schooldays, a picture drawn by the hand of friendship, elaborated by the fine touch of an inimitable genius.<sup>1</sup>

The records of his college-days are meagre and uncertain. It is known that he tried for the Craven scholarship, and was beaten. It is known also that he obtained the prize for a Greek ode in Sapphics on the Slave Trade, which was ridiculed afterwards by Porson for certain microscopic inaccuracies, and of which the author himself admits that the thoughts are better than the language in which they are conveyed. A fragment of this ode is preserved in a note on *The Destiny of Nations*, judging from which one

<sup>1</sup> "Essays of Elia:" ("Christ's Hospital Five-and-Thirty Years Ago").—E. J. A.

would say that the sentiments are such as are seldom manifested in prize-poems, if the language be not indeed such a choice mosaic as that which has been attained (*apis matinae more modoque*) by such exquisite mechanical artists as Lyttelton and Drury. It is said that his irregularities at college were numerous; but his moral character was spotless. Evening after evening, in his rooms upon the ground-floor, he used to astonish a select circle of youthful friends with impassioned political harangues, and recitations of the books and pamphlets which he had read in the course of the day. Of the immediate cause of his sudden disappearance from academic cloisters four accounts have been given. One is, that he was disappointed in love. A second, that he was exasperated and harassed by debt. Another, that he had already imbibed Unitarian doctrines, and had thereby disqualified himself for admission to the collegiate degree. The fourth is least probable. Friend, the mathematician, was tried and expelled from his Fellowship for some heretical crotchets on the doctrine of the Trinity. It is said that Coleridge violated discipline by applauding the speech of one of the advocates of the accused, and that this drew down the hostility of the authorities. However this may be, Coleridge disappeared; and when he next emerged upon the horizon of gentility, it was in the character of S. T. Coleridge, contributor to newspapers, late Silas



Tomken Comberbach (or Comberbacke—so entered in the War Office books), private in one of His Majesty's regiments of dragoons. He had never advanced beyond the awkward squad ; and of his rapid dismissal from the profession of arms, three versions are offered, of which (none of them being well authenticated) we are at liberty, I suppose, to select whichever pleases us best. We are to believe, accordingly, either that the clumsy dragoon was recognized by a friend in the streets, despite his blazoned accoutrements and jingling spurs; or that he astounded his captain, who had once dipped into Latin, by inscribing over his saddle the words, "*Eheu, quam infortunii miserrimum est fuisse felicem !*"; or that he corrected two of his officers in a dispute about a misquotation from Euripides, a phenomenon, says the narrator, which caused them to stare as though one of their own horses had sung "Rule, Britannia." At all events, he was discharged after a few months' service.

Now followed his acquaintance with Southey and Lovell ; his enthusiastic adoption of the principles of the French Revolution ; the strange dream of the Pantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna (selected by the colony on account of its poetically-sounding name) ; his introduction to Cottle, the literary bibliopole of Bristol ; the publication of his first volume of poems ; the marriage of the youthful enthusiasts to the Miss Frickers.

Byron, besides being unpardonably vulgar, commits a capital blunder in his sarcastic cut at the Pantisocratists, when he twits them with having espoused "three milliners of Bath." The Miss Frickers were not milliners; neither were they natives of Bath. They were ladylike and accomplished girls, living in humble circumstances in the good city of Bristol. The wife of Coleridge was worthy of him. She was a good wife and a good mother; and if some trivial misunderstanding may have existed at times between her and her husband, they were the natural result of the vast intellectual interval which separated them. Coleridge has been charged with abandoning his wife and children. But the charge is utterly untrue. The truth is, simply, that he put himself under the charge of a medical man, and lived in his house, when under the curse of opium; which was pretty much the same thing in kind as going into a private lunatic-asylum. At the same time he settled upon his wife and his children all the fixed part of his income. In his poems, he always speaks of them in the tenderest and most affectionate language. Mr. De Quincey relates a striking instance of Mrs. Coleridge's devotion to her family. "Wishing her daughter to acquire the Italian language, and having, in her retirement at Keswick, no means of obtaining a master, she set to work resolutely, under Mr. Southey's guidance, to learn the language herself,

at a time of life when such attainments are not made with ease or pleasure. She became mistress of the language in a very respectable extent, and thus communicated her new accomplishment to her most interesting daughter."

After his marriage Coleridge set to work with considerable resolution to win his bread in the precarious profession of literature. His political convictions were strong and deep. His detestation of the policy of Pitt was vehement and enthusiastic. Accordingly, he set up a journal, entitled *The Watchman*, and eloquently pleaded and indignantly inveighed through some eight or nine numbers; when the periodical, after a hopeless struggle for existence, suddenly collapsed and perished from inanition. Now, too, he employed himself in preaching to Unitarian congregations. Of the marvellous eloquence of these harangues Hazlitt has left an imperishable memorial. Coleridge's great powers of extempore speaking were thus early manifested; they seem to have culminated in his memorable conversations in later life, which attracted to Highgate crowds of distinguished and enraptured listeners, and which have been variously described by Carlyle, Hazlitt, De Quincey, and others.

During his residence in Somersetshire he became acquainted with Wordsworth, and the two poets formed a friendship deep and lasting, and fruitful in golden results. Two kindred souls, each revolving

around one common centre, as "twin stars of heaven of diverse hues decreed to intersect, but not to interfere."

The Wedgewoods have made a certain district of Staffordshire uninhabitable by any person imbued with the tenets of modern æsthetics, having converted rich fields and breezy downs into a howling wilderness of chimneys, a chaos of smoke and steam and soot, resounding with the roar of boilers and the shattering clangour of machinery, and sadly illumined by pale careworn foreheads and worldly eyes, faces with

"God's light all dim and cold."<sup>1</sup>

But, for this philanthropic blunder they perhaps in a measure atoned by rescuing Coleridge from his imminent peril of becoming an Unitarian minister; which they effected by subscribing to send him to Germany, where, at the University of Goettingen, he completed his education under the celebrated Blumenbach. After his return to England, the Mæcenases of "Etruria" again came forward as his benefactors.

Coleridge visited Germany in company with Wordsworth and his gifted sister. The tour is "rememberable" (to use one of Coleridge's many coinages) for an interview between the poets and

<sup>1</sup> From the Author's own poem "A Lament." (Poetical Works, New Edition, p. 374.)—ED.

Klopstock, and for having occasioned the beautiful lines written in the Hartz Forest, as well as the celebrated Hymn, said to be an expansion of a lyric by Frederica Münter.<sup>1</sup> During this visit Coleridge deepened and widened his acquaintance with German literature, and was particularly attracted by the German metaphysics. To Coleridge may be traced the first impulse of German thought upon the literature of England ; an influence which seems destined to permeate the national mind in a variety of forms during many a long day yet.

Towards the beginning of the present century Coleridge joined his brother-poet Wordsworth in the Lake-district. . . . Wordsworth and Coleridge mutually aided one another : Coleridge gave light, and Wordsworth reality. Each was a revelation to the other. To Wordsworth, the intellectual treasures of Coleridge seemed to be boundless. Wordsworth's passionate love of nature, and the understanding heart whereby he interpreted in leaf and flower the "Divine Idea," opened to Coleridge a world of wonder and delight. They were mutually pleased and enchanted. Wordsworth said that other

<sup>1</sup> By De Quincey, who, in the passage alluded to, charges Coleridge with several deliberate thefts. His assertion, however, that Coleridge appropriated from a German author the interpretation of Pythagoras's doctrine of the beans, only shows how superficial was the English reading of this literary detective. The identical explanation may be found in the *Tatler*, No. 240, *ad fin.*, a paper written by Addison.—E. J. A.

men had done great things, but Coleridge was the only great man he ever knew: Coleridge, in truly noble lines, has recorded his conviction that the poet of the *Excursion* would be ranked amidst the "choir of ever-during men."<sup>1</sup>

From this period the life of Coleridge presents few coignes of vantage for the essayist, and the student of biography will ever regret that the great talker of the nineteenth century was attended by no satellite Boswell to reflect his splendour to distant ages. He accepted the situation of [temporary] secretary to the Governor of Malta, with a salary of £800 a-year; a step to which he was induced mainly with the object of seeing the Mediterranean under favourable auspices. In Malta it is supposed that the solitude of his position confirmed him in the habit of taking opium, of which more hereafter. He did not remain long in office, which might have been anticipated, as the author of *Christabel* was hardly the man to be accurate in the composition of despatches, or a punctilious devotee in the idolatry of red-tape. In the course of a few months he [separated from] Sir Alexander Ball,<sup>2</sup> the Lieutenant-Governor; and left the island for the more congenial soil of Italy. After a short visit to Rome,

<sup>1</sup> See also "Table Talk," pp. 189, 207; and the "Biographia Literaria," V. 2, C. 9.—E. J. A.

<sup>2</sup> See an interesting account of this brave and upright officer in the concluding papers of "The Friend."—E. J. A.

and a brief stay at Naples, he returned to England, and—like Homer in his passage over Styx—was sea-sick during the whole of his voyage.

Taking up his quarters in the roaring streets of London once again, he wrote articles for the *Courier*, and delivered a course of lectures on Poetry and the Fine Arts in the Royal Institution. The lecture-room was flooded by a concourse of aristocratic idlers and distinguished men of letters; but the performance was in general a disappointment. Opium-eating was beginning to tell upon the constitution of its victim. His eye had lost its lustre; no longer “in a fine frenzy rolling” as it interpreted the workings of his spirit. His appearance was haggard, ghastly, and languid; his utterance was an effort and a struggle, with little of the old buoyancy and rapturous spontaneity. His voice, too, was deficient in its former sonorous volume and power of harmonious intonation. Added to which, the lectures were hurriedly and inartistically put together; his attendance was irregular; and he seemed to have no heart in the task. The life-struggle had commenced, and the hapless warrior was already crushed and feeble.

Returning again to the Lakes, he wrote and published his magnum opus, *The Friend*, which he gave to the world originally in numbers. This work from its very form was destined never to become popular in any sense. By the student and the truth-

seeker it will always be regarded as a vast mine of inestimable thoughts ; suggestive, seldom exhaustive ; demanding long labour and devoted research before its winding recesses and dark intricacies can be fully explored. The work was first printed at Penrith, a little town in Cumberland ; and, before many numbers were issued, the adventurous printer was ruined. Yet the same public that refused to purchase the serial numbers of *The Friend* fell down before shadowy Giaours and impossible Laras, worshipped the diseased sublimity of Harold, and chaunted pæans over the splendid worthlessness of Juan !

The autumn of 1810<sup>1</sup> fell with a chill upon the spirit of Coleridge. Laborious thought, incessant study, precarious health, and the inexorable tyranny of opium, had blighted and withered him and unhinged his mind, had enshrouded his soul with an atmosphere of melancholy gloom. The old familiar tarns and becks, the once-loved faces of the solitary hills, were a bitterness to him and a haunting woe. The fair valleys and the tranquil lakes now only awakened within him memories of sorrow and of shame. The consciousness of hours dreamt fruitlessly away and opportunities slipping from his grasp, was a torment which drove him like a goad. The overwrought mind has become diseased ; the

<sup>1</sup> See De Quincey ("Lake Poets : Samuel Taylor Coleridge").—E. J. A.



resolute arm has fallen powerless ; the strong, bright spirit is darkened by vapours of despair, or whirls in fiery surges beneath the blasts of violent storm. The awful and unendurable sense of decay—a feeling to which we are all at times exposed, but which has haunted great poets (Shakespeare, Dante, Shelley) with special and terrible intensity—now rises armed with Stygian terrors against the poor lost wanderer in thought, and menaces him from yellowing wood and quivering leaf, from dying blossom and wave-corroded shore, from “poignant reminiscences of faded power, and sudden intuitions coming and vanishing” as ghosts in the solitude.<sup>1</sup> Yet will he be free ; if not by grappling with his advancing foe, he will seek liberty by flight. Farewell, then, scenes of meditation and repose ! Farewell, reedy inlets, where the coot and wild-duck haunt ! Farewell, the daisy-sprinkled paths by dale and shore, refuge of poetic sensibility from the beaten world, consécration by many a reverie sublime, hallowed by many a brooding hour of philosophic contemplation !

ἔξω δὲ δρόμου φέρεται λύσσης  
πνεύματι μάργῳ.

Still faithful in his allegiance to the purpose to which he had dedicated his life, he repaired again to

<sup>1</sup> The account given by De Quincey is here closely followed.—ED.

London, and there spent the last four-and-twenty years of his existence upon earth. These years were occupied in intense study and metaphysical speculation. Again, evening after evening, as in the old college-days, a devoted band of disciples would crowd around "the old man eloquent," to listen to his inspired monologue, in which he would generally soar above his hearers, sweeping in vast orbits of thought to those conclusions when they "saw the God within him light his face." Much has been written about the prodigality and opulence of these extraordinary monologues. But the wisdom of the English Socrates has perished for want of a Plato. Faint reflexes alone have been transmitted to us,—images distorted and indistinct, which only show the transcendent brightness of the light which they reflect dispersedly. The most notable of these reminiscences, collected from various sources, I shall here transcribe, giving without dilution the testimony of many actual witnesses.—"His voice rolled on the ear like the pealing organ, and its sound alone was the music of thought," says Hazlitt. —"No written lecture," says De Quincey, "could have been more effectual than one of his unpremeditated colloquial harangues." Again (describing his conversation on the occasion of his first interview with the poet), "Coleridge, like some great river, the Orellana, or the St. Lawrence, that, having been checked and fretted by rocks or thwarting

islands, suddenly recovers its volume of waters and its mighty music, swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continuous strain of eloquent dissertation, certainly the most novel, the most finely illustrated, and traversing the most spacious fields of thought, by transitions the most just and logical it was possible to conceive.”—“The subjects of his conversation,” writes Mr. Gillan, “were varied as the characters of his interlocutors, and in each he was at home. Sameness was no feature in the mental constitution of Coleridge—he was no grand harper upon a solitary string—but through every range of human knowledge he wandered at will, and everywhere flowers sprung up at his tread.”—“Those who remember him in his more vigorous days can bear witness to the peculiarity and transcendent power of his conversational eloquence,” says a thoughtful writer in the *Quarterly Review*. “It was unlike anything that could be heard elsewhere; the kind was different, the degree was different, the manner was different. The boundless range of scientific knowledge, the brilliancy and exquisite nicety of illustration, the deep and ready reasoning, the strangeness and immensity of bookish lore, were not all: the dramatic story, the joke, the fun, the festivity, must be added—and with these the clerical-looking dress, the thick waving silver hair, the youthful-coloured cheek, the indefinable mouth and lips, the

quick yet steady and penetrating greenish-grey eye, the slow and continuous enunciation, and the everlasting music of his tones, all went to make up the image and to constitute the living presence of the man.”—Mr. Carlyle, however, in his *Life of Sterling*, reports somewhat differently; but at the period to which he refers, it must be borne in mind that Coleridge was on the verge of sixty. “A heavy-laden, high-aspiring, and surely much-suffering man,” he says. “His voice, naturally soft and good, had contracted itself into a plaintive snuffle and sing-song; he spoke as if preaching,—you would have said, preaching earnestly and also hopelessly the weightiest things. I still recollect his ‘object’ and ‘subject,’ terms of continual recurrence in the Kantian province; and how he sung and snuffled them into ‘om—m—mject’ and ‘sum—m—mject,’ with a kind of solemn shake or quaver, as he rolled along. No talk, in his century or in any other, could be more surprising.” Further on,—“I have heard Coleridge talk, with eager musical energy, two stricken hours, his face radiant and moist, and communicate no meaning whatsoever to any individual of his hearers,—certain of whom, I for one, still kept eagerly listening in hope; the most had long before given up, and formed (if the room were large enough) secondary humming groups of their own. He began anywhere: you put some question to him, made some suggestive observation; instead of

answering this, or decidedly setting out towards answer of it, he would accumulate formidable apparatus, logical swim-bladders, transcendental life-preservers, and other precautionary and vehiculatory gear, for setting out; perhaps he did at last get under way,—but was swiftly solicited, turned aside by the glance of some radiant new game on this hand or that, into new courses; and ever into new; and before long into all the Universe, where it was uncertain what game you would catch or whether any.<sup>1</sup> . . . Glorious islets, too, I have seen rise out of the haze; but they were few, and soon swallowed in the general element again. Balmy sunny islets, islets of the blest and the intelligible;—on which occasions those secondary humming groups would all cease humming; and hang breathless upon the eloquent words; till once your islet got wrapt in the mist again, and they could recommence humming. Eloquent artistically expressive words you always had; piercing radiances of a most subtle insight came at intervals; tones of noble pious sympathy, recognizable as pious though strangely coloured, were never wanting long: but in general

<sup>1</sup> The confusion of metaphor in this sentence is amusing and amazing. Surely, when a practised writer like Mr. Carlyle is caught tripping in this way, an occasional slip will be pardoned in the humble aspirant, to whom freedom of movement is as impossible as it was to David in the armour of Saul.—E. J. A. And, as the description proceeds, does not the confusion seem to become worse confounded?—ED.

you could not call this aimless, cloudcapt, cloud-based, lawlessly meandering human discourse of reason by the name of 'excellent talk,' but only of surprising."—Serjeant Talfourd is somewhat more charitable. "If," he says, "his entranced hearers often were unable to perceive the bearings of his argument—too mighty for any grasp but his own—and sometimes reaching beyond his own—they understood 'a *beauty* in the words, if not the words;' and a wisdom and a piety in the illustrations, even when unable to connect them with the idea which he desired to illustrate."<sup>1</sup>—Professor Masson records of Chalmers an impression similar to that produced on Mr. Carlyle. "He entertained me, sir, with a monologue of two hours. When we came away, I said to Edward Irving, who was with me, 'With the exception of a few lucid intervals, I have not understood anything of what he has been saying.' Irving said to me, 'Dr. Chalmers, I like to see a bright idea looming through the mist.' I replied, 'Well, I don't, Mr. Irving; what I like is to get round about it, and round about it, and round about it.'"<sup>2</sup>

From these and such-like reminiscences we gather a vague general idea of Coleridge's conversational

<sup>1</sup> "Final Memorials of Charles Lamb." By Serjeant Talfourd.—E. J. A.

<sup>2</sup> "Dead Men Whom I Have Known, &c.," in *Macmillan's Magazine* for Oct. 1864. See also the introductory note to Coleridge's "Table Talk," by H. N. Coleridge.—E. J. A.

displays ; but the eloquent words, the aspiring thoughts, the rare aphorisms scattered upon the highway with prodigal hand, the wondrous structures of poetic imagery, and subtly-spun webs of transcendental speculation,—these, alas ! save only in their untraceable results, are lost to us for ever ! For the specimens of his Table-Talk are unconnected fragments,—waifs and strays, from which we can form but a feeble and inadequate conception of the bulk and proportions of the original.

In April, 1816, Coleridge had placed himself under the care of Mr. Gillman, a surgeon at Highgate, in the hope that medical treatment and surveillance might wean him from his fatal propensity. Mr. Gillman's friendship was most kind and affectionate ; and in his house the suffering man continued to reside till his death, on the 25th of July, 1834. The last eighteen years of his life were monotonous, from an exterior point of view ; and we have no psychological history of the struggles and dark wrestlings of his inner life during this long period. In fact, his biography beyond the year 1816 still remains to be written. Neither Gillman nor Cottle has advanced beyond this limit.

From the verses written at intervals during the last five or six years of his life,<sup>1</sup> however, we may be enabled to form some distinct notions regarding

<sup>1</sup> Also from the small volume entitled "Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit," published posthumously.—E. J. A.

the convictions of his latter days. These poems are deeply meditative and full of serious meaning. The lines on St. Paul's words "Beareth all things," and those on the maxim of Juvenal, "*E cælo descendit γινῶθι σεαυτόν*," shine with a light of true and soul-deep piety. Full of hope, too, are the epitaphs which he has written upon himself. It is as though he saw Heaven opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.

"ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙΟΝ ΑΥΤΟΓΡΑΦΤΟΝ

"Quæ linquam, aut nihil, aut nihil, aut vix sunt mea—sordes  
Do morti ;—reddo cætera, Christe ! tibi."

"ΕΠΙΤΑΦΗ.

"Stop, Christian Passer-by !—Stop, child of God,  
And read with gentle breast. Beneath this sod  
A poet lies, or that which once seem'd he.—  
O, lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C. ;  
That he who many a year with toil of breath  
Found death in life, may here find life in death !  
Mercy for praise—to be forgiven for fame  
He ask'd, and hoped, through Christ. Do thou the same !"<sup>1</sup>

The face of Coleridge was the face of an enthusiast. The eyes, large and lustrous, kindled and dilated with a peculiar light. The forehead was lofty and round ; heavy with thoughtful meaning ; and contrasted with the bland and good-humoured expression of the mouth, which was the weakest of his features. Around his brow floated wavy curls

<sup>1</sup> "Poetical Works" (Moxon), pp. 333, 334.—E. J. A.



of silvery hair. He was considerably above the middle-height; well-proportioned; though tending rather to corpulence. A man of singular and striking aspect, whom once seen, it would not be easy to forget. Wordsworth's description of him, written on the fly-leaf of his pocket-copy of Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, is well known—

“A noticeable man with large gray eyes,  
And a pale face that seemed undoubtedly  
As if a blooming face it ought to be :  
Heavy his low-hung lip did oft appear,  
Deprest by weight of musing phantasy ;  
Profound his forehead was, though not severe.”

I am aware that there are those who would confine their view of the character of Coleridge to its defects, those who, in the severity of their morality, would forbid us to admire one who falls short in any respect of their ideal pattern of perfection. Irresolution; a diseased will; a miserable slavery to opium; a habit of deliberate and extensive plagiarism;<sup>1</sup>—these are the accusations with which the character of Coleridge has been charged. But we may admit all these imperfections, and still love and reverence the man. A human being may have accidental vices, and yet not be vicious essentially; nay, on the contrary, may even be intrinsically virtuous. To hold this view is not to indulge in a

<sup>1</sup> This charge, however, has been completely refuted in the Introduction to the “*Biographia Literaria*,” by H. N. Coleridge.—E. J. A.

pernicious laxity; it is only to be commonly charitable. Hazlitt, in his admirable essay on *Cant and Hypocrisy*, has put the matter clearly. Addison was fond of tippling, and *yet* he desired that the young Earl of Warwick might attend him on his deathbed, "to see how a Christian might die." "I see no inconsistency nor hypocrisy in this," says this eloquent and forcible writer. "A man may be a good Christian, a sound believer, and a sincere lover of virtue, and have, notwithstanding, one or more failings. If he had recommended it to others to get drunk, then I should have said he was a hypocrite, and that his pretended veneration for the Christian religion was a mere cloak put on to suit the purposes of fashion or convenience. His doing what it condemned was no proof of any such thing: the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak."

But look upon the character of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Did he yield a passive submission to the sin that did so easily beset him? Did he ever, in word or thought, glory in his weakness, as Byron in his immorality? . . . Did he not wail for ever for his feebleness before God? . . Did he not—

. . . . knowing his own frailty through and through—  
lift up his voice in perpetual cries for mercy, pleading for strength to conquer

evil thoughts,  
Base impulses, and cravings lit from Hell?

Pity for him whose days were as a moan of weakness,—whose strength was as the foam upon the wave, smitten and buffeted by the winds of night ! . . . Pity for him who cried in the bitterness and anguish of his heart, “ I am unworthy to call any good man my friend ! ” Judge not harshly him whose agony and remorse have forced the utterance of such words as these :—“ Conceive a poor, miserable wretch, who for many years has been attempting to beat off pain, by a constant recurrence to the vice that reproduces it. *Conceive a spirit in hell, employed in tracing out for others the road to that heaven from which his crimes exclude him.* In short, conceive whatever is most wretched, helpless, and hopeless, and you will form as tolerable a notion of my state as it is possible for a good man to have. I used to think the text in St. James, that ‘ he who offends in one point offends in all,’ very harsh ; but now I feel the awful, the tremendous truth of it. In the one crime of OPIUM, what crime have I not made myself guilty of ! Ingratitude to my Maker ; and to my benefactors injustice ; and unnatural cruelty to my poor children ; self-contempt for my repeated promise, breach of it, nay, actual falsehood ! ”<sup>1</sup>

And then, think of what he has done. Look at the multitude and variety of his labours. Poetry, the drama, criticism, philosophy, politics, theology,

<sup>1</sup> Cottle’s “ Remains.”—E. J. A.

oratory,—in all these difficult provinces of intellectual labour he has toiled, and won for himself in each a merited distinction. When we contemplate the versatility of his arduous pursuits, the amount which he has accomplished is astounding. Truly, in the still and unpretending history of the philosophical poet may be seen, by those who regard it closely, the writhing limbs and wrestling arms of a Titan. With infinite pity and deepest sorrow should we deal with that dark period, when the soul of such a man as this is withered almost into a desolation, with all its harmonies turned to mourning, “like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh ;” for it is an Eden, from which the glory of innocence is departing,—an Eden, wherein the voice of God is faintlier and more faintly heard.

And let it be remembered that through all the darkness of that weary night in the wilderness, this lost traveller still struggled onward, onward,—while his feet were sinking in the devouring sand, and, instead of a bright horizon to cheer him forward, there was nought but blackness before and around. Into the Valley of the Shadow of Death he has passed from human ken,—but, like Christian, singing psalms. And shall we doubt that he has been rescued? Shall we “fear lest the cries of his agony and sore distress” have met with no response?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the letter to his god-child, written twelve days before his death (“Table Talk,” pp. 343, 344).—E. J. A.

Shall we not rather believe that, beyond the darkness and the terror and the voices of temptation and of fear, he has found a resting-place calm and peaceful, in the bosom of infinite and eternal love? . . . .

. . . It is pitiful work to analyze a passion. But this is a prying and inquisitive age, which boasts of having discovered the art of philosophic criticism. The critic is now no longer professedly an iconoclast. He no longer "murders to dissect." He has adopted a scholastic phraseology. His pen distils honeyed words. He insinuates into his discourse the cabalistic terms, "phenomena," "subjectivity," "objectivity," "colour," "form," and so forth. He has, in fact, set up for an analytical philosopher.

What, then, is the special charm of Coleridge's poetry? We answer,—its tenderness, its harmony of thought and language proceeding from a deep inward harmony of the heart. It is "the still, sad music of humanity" that is the theme of all its gorgeous variations, from that grand orchestral burst of praise in the Alpine valleys to the low sweet flute-note of domestic affection. That feeling of humanity is at the centre of it all. Whether he sings, in the simple numbers of a boyish inspiration, of the breast of Genevieve "heaving with pity;" whether he weeps in true-felt passion over the famished limbs and sorrow-withered face of the

dead Chatterton; whether he sighs for his native land in the rude forest-clad heights of the Brocken; or yearns for his Sara amid the barren solitudes of English hills; the warm human heart throbs and palpitates, the warm bosom glows with sympathy and love. Nay, even his most fantastic poems are built upon this basis; to this key-note his wildest melodies recur. De Quincey has well observed that there are three readers of *The Ancient Mariner*.<sup>1</sup> The one sees nothing but the phantasmagoria of a fairy-tale. The second, cleverer but not wiser, perceives that the brain of the weird story-teller is delirious; that he is mastered by a fit of frenzy, compelled by a superhuman force to give utterance to his withering tale. But the third sees deeper. The Mariner has slain the only living thing that loved him; and hence the agonies of an upbraiding conscience, the tortures of an unrelenting remorse.

“He prayeth well, who loveth well  
Both man and bird and beast.  
He prayeth best, who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.”

And this is the poem which poor Hazlitt, in a fit of spleen, has shamefully stigmatized as “High German;” in which he charges the author of “conceiving

<sup>1</sup> “The Spanish Military Nun” (Vol. iii. of the Collected Works).—E. J. A.

of poetry but as a drunken dream, reckless, careless, and heedless of past, present, and to come."<sup>1</sup> The *Christabel*, too, fragmentary and fitful though it be, turns upon the conflict of a father's feelings with the disgrace of violated hospitality, and there breaks off—as though the poet had no heart to proceed with the agonizing narration.

I believe this tenderness of disposition, tremulous as a woman's sensibility, yet the noblest and manliest of all attributes, to be the distinguishing mark of the true modern poet. Given a man of high imaginative power, the first question to be asked is not, "How does he paint his scenery?"—or "How does he deal with the leading questions of the day?" As the poet is something greater than a mere artist, or a mere modulator of words, or a mere sociologist or politician, as he is indeed a prophet and evangelist amongst men, our first question should be, "How far does he sympathize with the impulses of our universal being? How far does he interpret and reveal those truths which we blindly feel, but cannot clearly see?" Devoid of sympathy, he cannot in anywise be a revealer. Endowed with this rare and priceless gift, he may take his rank among his purple peers, in that imperishable Pantheon where sit Shakespeare, Goethe, Wordsworth, Burns.

<sup>1</sup> The conclusion of his "Lectures on the English Poets," one of the most deeply melancholy passages, out of fiction, that I have ever read.—E. J. A.

But with this exquisite sensibility of temperament Coleridge has combined the breadth and subtlety of a philosophic mind. Wordsworth is, indeed, commonly regarded as the most philosophical of our modern poets; but, while his poetry is in general more discursive than that of Coleridge, his philosophy is severe and stately, nor is it so thoroughly interpenetrated by fancy, emotion, or keen and versatile sympathy. Neither is his range of thought so varied. An eloquent writer and thoughtful observer speaks of his mind as being characterized by an extreme, intense, unparalleled *one-sidedness*; and this peculiarity was at once a cause and a result of his habits of life. We are informed that he cared for few books save those which could be considered as "enshrining the very ideal, capital, and elementary grandeur of the human intellect." "There were only two provinces of literature," we are told, "in which he could be looked upon as decently read—Poetry and Ancient History." He lived in the world of his own abstractions. Externally, the circumstances which surrounded him were calculated to throw him in upon himself, rather than to distract him and to dissipate his energies and sympathies in the life-struggle. He never was forced to do stern battle with circumstance; for to the petty hiss of disapproval which greeted the dawn and the noontide of his powers he arose immeasurably superior, in the stateliness of his



intellectual pride. Endowed with a moderate, but respectable, competency, surrounded by the natural scenery which he made it his high calling to celebrate, lapped in leisure and domestic peace, he neither knew, nor cared for entering into, those dark and perilous sinuosities of our nature which a great dramatist, "a myriad-minded" poet, *must* traverse perforce. "Paradise for his eye, in Miltonic beauty, lay outside his windows; Paradise for his heart, in the perpetual happiness of his own fireside."

But Coleridge transfuses his philosophy always with the rich colouring of his splendid imagination. Neither is there any limit to the catholicity of his learning. He has travelled over the ample range of Grecian thought; over the barren wildernesses of the philosophy of the schoolmen; into the perilous ocean of German metaphysics he has ventured, and hailed the shadowy outlines of undiscovered continents. Human character he has studied earnestly and deeply—witness his lectures on Cervantes and Shakespeare—witness the dramatic power of his tragedy *Remorse*. Storm-tossed and wave-buffed in his early life, he has learnt in his own experience the stern tragedy of human existence. A tone of melancholy, subtle and tender, gives a fulness and a volume to his song,—the tone of one who wrestles with his passion, with little in it to suggest the calmness of the objective philosopher. Indeed, few poets are more intensely subjective than

Coleridge. This characteristic runs through all his works, from the fugitive lyric to the elaborate didactic, from the pregnant aphorism to the diffusive metaphysical disquisition. Thus Coleridge is a poet even in his philosophy; Wordsworth in his poetry is often still the philosopher, calm, judicial, and austere.

If we pass from the more general aspect of his poetry to a minute examination of its texture, we are first struck with its exquisite involutions of sound-music, the sweetest and the richest, for which a celebrated critic has pronounced that it would be difficult to find a match in our own or any other language. "If your delineation be authentically *musical*," says Mr. Carlyle, "musical not in word only, but in heart and substance, in all the thoughts and utterances of it, in the whole conception of it, then it will be poetical; if not, not.—Musical: how much lies in that! A *musical* thought is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing; detected the inmost mystery of it, namely the *melody* that lies hidden in it; the inward harmony of coherence which is its soul, whereby it exists, and has a right to be, here in this world. . . . Poetry, therefore, we will call *musical Thought*."<sup>1</sup> Now, Coleridge is not only musical, but he achieves the highest feats of harmonious expression apparently without an effort. His verse

<sup>1</sup> "Lectures on Heroes," &c.—E. J. A.

flows naturally, whether in excitement or in meditative calm—

fluminis ritu  
Cum pace delabentis Etruscum  
In mare, nunc lapides adesos  
Stirpesque raptas et pecus et domos  
Volventis una.

Professor Craik is correct in his opinion that the music of Coleridge has no parallel in our language; for, although it might be replied that the *Raven* of Edgar Allan Poe, or some of the lyrics of the present Laureate,<sup>1</sup> are more melodiously constructed in syllable and pause, no critic of any experience will venture to claim for these sweet-voiced singers the spontaneity of Coleridge's expression. *Ars est celare artem*. But the artifice of Tennyson and Poe is so palpable on the surface that already their imitators are Legion. Take, for example, two lines, which are as rich in melody as any that Mr. Tennyson has written—

“The moan of doves in immemorial elms,  
And murmuring of innumerable bees.”

Take from Poe's *Raven* this fine example of onomatopœia:—

“But the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple  
curtain. . . .”

And then compare with these those opulent tones

<sup>1</sup> See, however, the opinion of Mr. Tennyson's versification in the “Table Talk,” p. 236.—E. J. A.

from *Kubla Khan* which Coleridge delighted to recite—

“A damsel with a dulcimer  
In a vision once I saw ;  
It was an Abyssinian maid,  
And on her dulcimer she played,  
Singing of Mount Abora.”<sup>1</sup>

The latter is the very soul of music. It baffles the most minute analysis. The former, very sweet and very soft, are made up of a skilful alliteration and a felicitous disposition of the vowel sounds. A little practice, and any person may turn out such, *stans pede in uno*. It is as if one should institute a comparison between the national melody of England and the subtleties of Mendelssohn or Weber.

This power of rhythmic perfection, the natural gift of a true poet, was appreciated by none more keenly than by Coleridge himself, its mighty and unrivalled master. In his *Biographia Literaria* he writes thus :—“The delight in richness and sweetness of sound, even to a faulty excess, if it be evidently original, and *not the result of an easily imitable mechanism*, I regard as a highly favourable promise in the compositions of a young man. ‘The man that hath not music in his soul’ can indeed never be a genuine poet. . . . The sense of musical delight, with


<sup>1</sup> “As he repeated this passage,” says Serjeant Talfourd, “his voice seemed to mount and melt into air, as the images grew more visionary, and the suggested associations more remote.”—(*Memorials of Charles Lamb*.)—E. J. A.

the power of producing it, is a gift of imagination; and this, together with the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect, and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling, may be cultivated and improved, but can never be learnt. It is in these that '*Poeta nascitur non fit.*'"<sup>1</sup>

The diction of Coleridge is a happy mean between the statuesque formality of the age which immediately preceded him, and that inartistic simplicity which formed the cardinal doctrine of Wordsworth's poetical creed, but which was, fortunately, by him rarely carried into practice. The sudden development of a novel energy which heralded the saturnalia of the French Revolution, was not less remarkable for its effect upon the character of literature than for the political changes which it wrought in Europe. The Age of Ritualism—the Age of Starch, as Mr. Ruskin has called it—was about to give place to a nobler successor, an age of freedom, political, moral, intellectual. Formalism was growing old, and its authority was waxing feeble; the maxims of the schools were exploded; ancient landmarks were violently removed; ancient sanctities were assailed by a tempestuous surge of ridicule and doubt; and minds, labouring with the new birth, gave utterance to their passion in an eloquence too earnest to acknowledge the restrictive laws of a more apathetic time. For more than a century


<sup>1</sup> "Biog. Lit.," Vol ii., pp. 16, 17.—E. J. A.

before the appearance of that brilliant constellation of writers who have made our age an epoch in literature, style had become enervated and effeminate in its excess of outward adornment ; energy had been sacrificed for elegance, muscle and sinew for delicacy of complexion and fairness of skin. Cold, timid, and superficial, poetry had dwindled into a petty trick of versification. The ringing heroic couplet of Dryden and Pope was slavishly imitated by those who lacked the genius to inform it with spirit and with fire. Every sentiment was excluded which refused to be compressed into that bed of Procrustes, that "disjunctive conjunction of epigrams." Men must be swains, and maidens must be nymphs. The sun had ceased to shine in the poetic firmament ; its place was occupied by "Day's refulgent car." The lion roared only in Nemea's forests. Poets droned lazily on oaten pipes the somniferous melodies of Arcadia,—"*choruses*," says Lamb, "in which, I apprehend, the sheep might have joined the shepherd." Then came the change—a revolution violent and overwhelming. Burns had spoken from a passionate heart in the rustic accents of his native soil, and the natural force and wild power of his Bœotian dialect had made themselves felt even within the most esoteric literary circles. Cowper had set at scorn the frigid mechanism and classical affectation of his immediate predecessors, and had absolutely charmed an artificial age with simple



homely verse about morning walks in winter, and the shrubberies and sofas of Olney. The publication of Percy's *Reliques*, the Chatterton forgeries, and the apocryphal epics of Macpherson, had imparted a new and more natural taste to the jaded appetite of the reading public. Then arose Sir Walter, and spread a transient but splendid lustre around the metrical romance of his creation. Wordsworth, Southey, Byron, and Coleridge, each brought in a novel manner, each a different style, strongly marked with the individuality of the writers, and deliberately in defiance of the insipid fashions which had hitherto held favour. The day of classical frigidity had lingered through the dreary twilight and passed into utter darkness. The dawn of the romantic renaissance had arrived, soon to brighten into warm and glorious noon.

But a time of reformation is invariably a time of violence and excess. In the *Tale of a Tub*, the representative of Calvinism, in his eagerness to tear off the lace and embroidery from the coat, the legacy of his father, rends indiscriminately both the cloth and the frippery which disfigures it. According to Milton, poetry ought to be simple, sensuous, impassioned; but Wordsworth, in his celebrated Preface, advocated a theory of poetical diction which could never be carried into practice without reducing poetry to mere prose. Naturally and unavoidably he drew down upon himself and his



friends a storm of ridicule and censure, to which Coleridge himself was exposed, and of which he has borne far more than his merited share. For Coleridge, although a profound admirer of the genius of Wordsworth,—a splendour to which no true lover of poetry will ever be blind,—yet never adopted or even sanctioned his theory. On the contrary, he has ably exposed it in the Second Volume of the *Biographia Literaria*.<sup>1</sup>


The diction of Coleridge is, as I have said, a golden mean between the two. It is classical in the expression of elevated and philosophic thought. It is romantic in the wild ballad and imaginative lyric. It is elegant and polished in the light *pièce de circonstance*, in the metaphysical *pensée*, in the epigram. It is simple and idiomatic, and thrills us like a mother's story in childhood, when the poet deals with passion and fantasy, and more especially with terror, as in the rude vivid words of the Mariner, and the awed, impassioned earnestness of the narrative in *Christabel*. Above all, it is clear and pellucid always; its mannerisms are few and inoffensive; it is perfectly free from the affectations which blemish the works of our two greatest living poets, obscurity and tautology, the perplexing intricacies of unusual modes of expression, and the wearisome and childish reiterations of favourite words.

You seldom take up a critique of Coleridge's

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. Chapters iv. v. vi. vii.—E. J. A.



poetry without being met by the remark that his genius was fragmentary and incapable of sustained effort ; or, at least, that, if he had written all that he *could* have written, or half the poems he projected, he would have been one of the greatest poets of all time. Yet, have we not been repeatedly assured by the critics that there are several distinct orders of poets,—the epical, the lyrical, the dramatic, the philosophical, the satirical, and so forth ? Now, to me it appears that the lyrical poet must by necessity be fragmentary ; the philosophical poet *may* be so, and indeed generally *is* so—for is not *The Excursion* a fragment ? what unity is observed in the *De Rerum Naturâ* of Lucretius, in the metaphysical fancies of Henry More the Platonist, in Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*, in Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination* ?—Now, Coleridge was a philosophical poet ; but, more than this, although he has written dramas, his genius was eminently lyrical. His best poems are in the lyrical form. His greatest poem, the *Hymn at Chamouni*, is lyrical in its conception, lyrical in its very utterance, in spite of the blank verse. His reflective poems are continually enlivened with bursts of lyrical passion. They are all, even when most metaphysical, thoroughly subjective. In fine, Coleridge is essentially a lyrist. Therefore it is idle to deplore the fragmentary nature of his productions. What, would you have Milton inditing love-songs, or Cowley building the elaborate



rhythm of a grand religious epic? Anacreon Moore, with all the inspiration of three thousand pounds, and the Oriental atmosphere of his greenhouse in Derbyshire, attempted a sustained narrative and failed deservedly. Alfred Tennyson, most musical, most exquisite of lyrists, having permitted the British public to wait for years in palpitating expectancy of two great epics, has at length produced four beautiful idylls in beautiful octavo, and a sufficiently "barbarous experiment" in the ear-splitting Galliambics of the *Atys* of Catullus. The genius of both poets being lyrical, it was vain to anticipate from them epical completeness. Why should we lament that this has not been given us by Coleridge?

But if, individually, his poems are fragmentary, I maintain that, taken as a whole, they contain an unity infinitely greater, deeper, and more true than that prescribed by Aristotle and Horace,—an unity of moral purpose, which is the Alpha and Omega of a writer's perdurability. No wild poet is this, who

"works

Without a conscience or an aim."

"Poetry," he has written in memorable words, "has been to me its own 'exceeding great reward;' it has soothed my afflictions; it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments; it has endeared solitude; and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the Good and the Beautiful in all that

meets and surrounds me." It is true, we have not in this volume the fury of Orestes, or the terrible anguish of Medea ; we have not the gigantic despair of Prometheus, or the impassioned madness of Cassandra ; we are not stirred by the wild pulsations of the heroic Hector, or thrilled by the wailings of Andromache bereaved. There are few of Shakespeare's utterances of despair—words that wither up the soul like the hot blasts of a furnace. There are none of the great master's touches of comedy, sufficient to make even Nestor swear the jest is laughable. And, as there is little of dramatic intensity, so neither is there epic grandeur. The reader of Coleridge will behold no conflicts as of Titans, no forests of spears and thronging helms, no imperial ensigns streaming to the blast, no flashing eyes and breasts throbbing with heroic impulse, no rush of onset or panic of retreat. But we are not to depreciate his poems for this. He has conferred a boon upon literature and upon mankind in consecrating his poetry to a great and holy aim. He is not merely the gifted creator and wonder-working artist ; he is likewise the solemn worshipper, and the teacher, earnest, conscientious, and devoted.

Whatever differences of opinion may exist with regard to the object of poetry, so far forth as the poet alone is concerned, there should be none, I think, with regard to the object which the reader of poetry should always hold before him. No doubt,

the gratification which we obtain from a true poem, the abstraction by which it wiles us away from the dust and tumult of the world, is a noble use of poetry. But we should read poetry with a higher object than to obtain pleasure, or even delight. We should read poetry to be instructed, to be edified. The poet is the maker, the creator of character, the creator of immortal expression ; and, though pleasure may in some cases be the sole aim of the poet, instruction should in general be the object of the student of poetry . . . Philosophy may discover and may regulate the laws of taste ; but there is no law by which a man can be compelled to admire or to dislike, in spite of himself. You cannot press your favourite poet, your favourite novelist, or your favourite painter upon any one ; and the man in the temple of whose soul *Don Juan* occupies the highest niche, cannot be forced by you to substitute *The Excursion* in its place. But there is a higher law of taste, I would fain believe, than any which have been arrived at through the medium of dissertations on the Sublime and Beautiful. It is the law of conscience, to which every one is amenable, and by which every one is justified in condemning and approving. In poetry, at least, of all arts, you cannot divorce the moral aspect from the intellectual. Otherwise it is indeed "the wine of demons,"—exciting and maddening, it may be, but not strengthening or nourishing the soul. Why is

it that Byron's influence has been gradually and surely decreasing, while the influence of Wordsworth is widening day after day, and is permeating all the higher forms of our literature? Simply because both these great poets have been tried before the inexorable tribunal of human conscience, and the one has been approved, while the other has been found wanting.

With all the outward faults of Coleridge's character, he was a deeply religious man. Life lay upon his spirit like a nightmare, through which he tossed and struggled in the stern effort to awake and gaze upon the light. Let no one by magnifying his errors blind himself to the sublime purpose of this great man's labours. "If to do were as easy as to teach others what were good to be done, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces."

To this consideration, in the last analysis, all true criticism is reduced. To take the works of a poet, and to set down in the margins the phrases "objective," "subjective," "morbid," "exquisitely pathetic," "finely musical," and such-like, is a beneficial exercise of the discerning faculty, an agreeable and amiable accomplishment. But to ring changes upon these words throughout an entire paper is not properly to criticise a poet; it is merely to "write about him and about him." To go beneath the smooth surface of conventional disquisition, we must ask a graver question and expect a more

solemn answer—What is the object of the poet ?  
What is the purpose of the man ?

If the moral purpose of Coleridge's poetry does not stand forth in strong relief, it is because he did not depend solely upon poetry for the manifestation of his deeper convictions. His prose is much more voluminous than his poetry, and it absorbed a much larger portion of his life. To prose, for the most part, he has had recourse for the exposition of his views on politics, philosophy, and social science. Poetry he has used rather as an escape-valve to his feelings, and hence most of his poems are occasional. But by the light of his later poems we may read the purpose of his life.

“What hast thou, Man, that thou dar'st call thine own ?—  
What is there in thee, Man, that can be known ?—  
Dark fluxion, all unfixable by thought,  
A phantom dim of past and future wrought,  
Vain sister of the worm,—life, death, soul, clod—  
*Ignore thyself, and strive to know thy God !*”

Again—

“God's child in Christ adopted,—Christ my all,—  
What that earth boasts were not lost cheaply, rather  
Than forfeit that blest name, by which I call  
The Holy One, the Almighty God, my Father ?—  
Father ! in Christ we live, and Christ in Thee—  
Eternal Thou, and everlasting we.  
The heir of heaven, henceforth I fear not death :  
In Christ I live ! in Christ I draw the breath  
Of the true life !—Let then earth, sea, and sky  
Make war against me ! On my front I show

Their mighty master's seal. In vain they try  
 To end my life, that can but end its woe.—  
 Is that a death-bed where a Christian lies?—  
 Yes ! but not his—'t is Death itself that dies.”

This note, full and distinct, is also sounded in other poems ; it steals softly and sweetly into the sonnet, the epigram, and the ballad ; it swells the choral burst of rapture in which the prophet-poet calls upon Earth with her thousand voices to praise the Invisible, the Eternal. It were idle and wearisome to multiply quotations ; but two great passages I will select, the first as embodying fervid patriotism and true religion mutually enfolded ; the second as revealing *indirectly* (which is the highest function of art) the grand central principle of the teachings of our Master, Christ :—

“ O native Britain ! O my Mother Isle !  
 How shouldst thou prove aught else but dear and holy  
 To me, who from thy lakes and mountain-hills,  
 Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks and seas,  
 Have drunk in all my intellectual life,  
 All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,  
 All adoration of the God in nature,  
 All lovely and all honourable things,  
 Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel  
 The joy and greatness of its future being ? ”—

“ SONNET XII.

“ Sweet Mercy ! how my very heart has bled  
 To see thee, poor Old Man ! and thy gray hairs  
 Hoar with the snowy blast : while no one cares  
 To clothe thy shrivelled limbs and palsied head.

My Father ! throw away this tattered vest  
 That mocks thy shivering ! take my garment—use  
 A young man's arm ! I'll melt these frozen dews  
 That hang from thy white beard and numb thy breast.  
 My Sara too shall tend thee, like a Child :  
 And thou shalt talk, in our fire-side's recess,  
 Of purple pride, that scowls on wretchedness.  
 He did not so, the Galilean mild,  
 Who met the Lazars turned from rich men's doors,  
 And called them Friends, and healed their noisome Sores !”

Coleridge's *Remorse* has been pronounced by competent authorities to be the best dramatic poem of modern times. It is correctly styled a dramatic poem rather than a drama, since it is far better fitted for the study than for the stage. In the conception of the characters there is a degree of individuality which has been attained in our days by no dramatist except Robert Browning.<sup>1</sup> The weak, confiding Valdez ; the brave and high-minded Alvar ; the cold, suspecting Dominican, Monviedro ; the faithful Zulimez ; Alhadra, the wild and passionate Moresca woman ; Teresa, patient, suffering, hoping, believing ; Ordonio, cowardly and selfish, fratricide and murderer, yet rent, shattered, consumed by the volcanic fires of a conscience that may slumber but will never die ; each separately is a perfect study, and the interlacing movement of the one about the other is conceived in the highest inspiration of art. And besides the dramatic gran-

<sup>1</sup> “Luria” has more individuality, but less spontaneity.—  
 E. J. A.



deur of this poem, there is flawless execution of the details. The verse is smooth, and broken, and agitated, and tumultuous, in accordance with the passion; the scenery is grand and romantic, in keeping with the elevation of the action; the situations are striking; the plot artistically developed; the sentiments lofty and commanding. There is one defect. Here and there the colouring is slightly sensational—as in the scene in the Hall of Armory, for instance, and the murder of Isidore in the cavern-scene. But this is a fault common to most youthful writers, and is perhaps, if not in excess, one of the most unmistakable indications of genius. Rashness in a young man is better than timidity.

*Zapolya* is also a dramatic poem. It is an imitation of the *Winter's Tale* of Shakespeare. In its present form it is manifestly intended for a reading-drama. I confess I recur to it with greater pleasure than to the *Remorse*. I think there is more dramatic variety in it. I delight in the contrast between the brave old Raab Kiuprili and the injured queen, Zapolya, whom he follows through her sufferings with a noble, chivalric devotion.<sup>1</sup> Then, what a detestable rascal is that lily-livered fellow, Laska!

<sup>1</sup> The story very closely resembles that of a beautiful Breton drama, entitled "Triffine," given by M. Souvestre in his "Derniers Bretons."—E. J. A.—See the Author's own "Poetical Works" (New Edition), p. 153.—ED.

What a coarse lump of clay is Pestalutz ! Old Bathory, the mountaineer, has in his countenance and his spirit the nobility of a duke. Lady Sárolda is a perfect Madonna. Glycine, the orphan girl, is one of those exquisite conceptions of feminine sweetness that rank with Desdemona, and Imogen, and Mariana, and Beatrice Cenci. Lastly, the character of Lord Casimir is a most valuable psychological study. The struggle between his worse and his better nature ; between his ambition and his conscience ; between his love of power and his loyalty and filial piety ; is a spiritual phenomenon on which many a profitable chapter might be written.

The poetry of Coleridge, enshrining true religion in its loveliest and stateliest forms, may be likened to a noble Gothic cathedral, with its gorgeous ante-chapels, its silent cells, its oratories, and its sepulchral recesses ; a beautiful temple dedicated to one great faith, consecrated to one pure and spiritual worship ; wherein "the still, sad music of humanity" is heard fitfully and plaintively amidst the raptured quiring as it were of angels. The architecture of the parts is varied ; but the effect of the whole is harmonious ; and the work must be judged as a whole, not from the moulding of a single cornice, or from the stately curve of a single arch. And through the painted choir and solemn nave and long colonnaded aisles rolls on a rich antiphony, containing passages of thrilling pathos, which stir the deepest heart with

anguish ; sudden and transient bursts of joyous melody, which fire the soul with fervid but momentary hope ; confused and bewildering tumults of intermingling notes in which the music of the leading theme is almost lost ; and at last a flood of jubilant and triumphant harmony which seems to indicate that Grief has been wrestled with and trampled under foot by the unconquerable prowess of Hope and Faith. A solemn hush, a soul-subduing close, revealing the Heaven of Heavens to our gaze !

The same devotion to the most sublime of purposes, the same irresistible feeling of his relation to the Infinite, is manifested in his other writings. The *Aids to Reflection*, a series of notes on the aphorisms of Archbishop Leighton, were intended as "disciplinary and preparatory rules and exercises," for the foundation of a "system of faith and philosophy." *The Friend* was undertaken solely with a view to assist in the formation of fixed principles in politics, morals, and religion. The *Lay Sermons* and other works are designed for similar philanthropic purposes. In a word, the whole body of his writings, taken in one view, is an incomplete system of philosophy ; and has been justly compared to the plan of a magnificent city, with noble streets unfinished, and great buildings abandoned in process of construction ; the design being still prominent and testified everywhere by unmistakable signs.

This system of philosophy has been interpreted

by Mr. F. G. A. Hort, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, in a paper contained in the *Cambridge Essays* for 1856. It has also found an able exponent in John Stuart Mill,<sup>1</sup> who, although of opposite politics, pays a warm tribute to the honesty and breadth and catholic spirit of Coleridge. He also announces in bold language his conviction of the mighty influence that Coleridge is destined to exercise upon future thought in England. Mr. Mill of course dissents from the central doctrine of the metaphysics of Coleridge and of Kant, but cordially and gracefully acknowledges Coleridge's eminent services to philosophy in having swept away much of the accepted fallacies of Locke and Condillac. Coleridge he looks upon as the leader of the re-action which has been rolling steadily forward since his time,—“insupportably advancing” against the corruptions and extravagancies of old opinions, though, it cannot be denied, *destructive* rather than *constructive* in its progress.

It would be manifestly unsuitable in a sketch like the present to attempt an analysis of Coleridge's philosophy. Eagerly, in truth, have I striven to comprehend, embracing clouds Ixion-like ; yet must it be confessed that the forms of these gorgeous clouds have often changed and baffled me—at times even rolling away altogether into infinite space ; so that frequently I have been led to doubt

<sup>1</sup> “Dissertations and Discussions,” Vol. ii.—E. J. A.

whether they were after all substantial shapes of gas and water, or the inessential visions of a dream. I shall, therefore, content myself with attempting to construct a shadowy outline of the Coleridgean philosophy, as it appears in its general bearings.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*  
\*            \*            \*            \*            \*  
\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

While at Christ's Hospital, as has been already mentioned, he translated the Hymns of Synesius into English verse. This Synesius was a pupil of Hypatia, the beautiful Neo-Platonist of Alexandria, and still retained his philosophical persuasions after his conversion to the Christian faith. Thus, before arriving at the age of fourteen, Coleridge had made himself acquainted with the Neo-Platonism of the Alexandrian schools. Before he left Cambridge he had read through the whole range of eighteenth-century metaphysics from Leibnitz to Hartley,—the latter of whom, along with Berkeley, he continued to admire with a most devoted enthusiasm for several years. From this the transition to Unitarianism was natural and easy. The return to Christianity was effected through the metaphysics of Spinoza and Kant—a perilous and mazy tract, through which (as Dante was guided by Virgil in analogous obscurities) he was directed to a more luminous region by Eichhorn and Schelling. From this period to the close of his life, he devoted

himself to one continued effort to unite and harmonize the speculations of Kant and Schelling with the Christianity of St. Paul and St. John.

According to Coleridge, then, Philosophy includes Theology, and Religion is right Reason applied to morals and worship.<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of the Trinity is resolved into a formula closely resembling the Neo-Platonic Triad—"The Being or the Good, the Nous or Logos or the Reason, and the Psyche or Soul of the World." The relation of the Father to the Son is that of Being to Knowledge, or of the Mind to the Idea. Reason is "the supreme reality, the only true Being in all things visible and invisible; the *pleroma*, in whom alone God loveth the world." The Word, or Logos, is "life and communicates life; is light and communicates light." Again, "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" is "the Intuitive Reason." Faith is the synthesis of the individual will and the Reason. Imagination is "that reconciling and mediatory power, which, incorporating the reason in images of sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanent and self-circling energies of the reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors."

Psychology he considers a much inferior study

<sup>1</sup> "Church and State," Appendix B.—E. J. A.

to Ethics. Indeed, his denunciation of those whom he looks upon as giving an undue prominence to this science, is severe. Yet the confusion of sensibility with morality is a far worse evil in his eyes than the confusion of morality with prudence. "Are not reason, discrimination, law, and deliberate choice," he demands, "the distinguishing characters of humanity? Can aught, then, worthy of a human being . . . proceed from those who for law and light would substitute shapeless feelings, sentiments, and impulses, which, as far as they differ from the vital workings in the brute animals owe the difference to their former connection with the proper virtues of humanity?"

Holding such views as these, it is somewhat surprising, as Mr. Hort observes, that Coleridge nowhere in his writings shows any acquaintance even with the name of Butler.<sup>1</sup> The fact is that Coleridge was better acquainted with the metaphysicians than with the great moralists of England. Otherwise, says Mr. Hort, it is impossible to believe that Coleridge can have known a man of such laborious

<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt, however, gives us a glimpse of his opinion of Butler:—"He considered Bishop Butler as a true philosopher, a profound and conscientious thinker, a genuine reader of nature and his own mind. He did not speak of his 'Analogy,' but of his 'Sermons' at the Rolls' Chapel, of which I had never heard. Coleridge somehow always contrived to prefer the *unknown* to the *known*." ("My First Acquaintance with Poets.") This was in 1798.—ED.

and far-seeing thought, so impatient of the isolation of any principle however firm, so possessed with the idea of a constitution, and holding fast so earnestly the unity of all things, without placing him habitually among his chosen friends of all ages.<sup>1</sup>

The great doctrine of Kant, that demonstration is valid within its own province, but that we can and do act, and rightly act, independently of demonstration, is frequently insisted upon by Coleridge. To the reception of this doctrine he himself owed his deliverance from Unitarianism. In theology he sided with the Calvinists rather than with the Arminians ; yet with neither party did he range himself completely. Catholicism he disliked with a cordial abhorrence, regarding it as involving a violation of "the sacred distinction between things and persons." Indeed, even in the most subtle and perplexing of his speculations on the doctrine of the Trinity, this clear recognition of personality is to be found at the heart. It runs through the whole of his philosophy. On this subject he says distinctly (*Confessio Fidei*):—"The Trinity of persons in the unity of the God would have been a necessary idea of my speculative reason, deduced from the necessary postulate of an intelligent creator, whose ideas being anterior to the things, must be more actual than those things, even

<sup>1</sup> "Cambridge Essays" for 1856, p. 336.—E. J. A.



as those things are more actual than our images derived from them ; and who, as intelligent, must have had co-eternally an adequate idea of himself, in and through which he created all things in heaven and earth.”<sup>1</sup> The evidences of Christianity he classifies into (I) Miracles ; (II) the material of Christianity, its existence and history ; and (III) the doctrines of Christianity and the correspondence of human nature to those doctrines, illustrated ( $\alpha$ ) historically, and ( $\beta$ ) individually. He condemns “ a belief that seeks no darkness, and yet strikes no root, immoveable as the limpet from the rock, and like the limpet fixed there by mere force of adhesion.”

Such, in necessarily meagre outline, appears to be the centre around which, in different planes and with different eccentricities, the speculations of Coleridge revolve. I feel that I am here treading upon delicate and dangerous ground. Such niceties and subtleties may have little charm for us. We may have ceased to question the mysteries which surround us on every side ; content to believe many things which we cannot prove ; nay, even *compelled* to believe where we cannot by mere reason account for our belief. Nevertheless, the spectacle of this great mind earnestly pursuing truth for the sake of truth alone ; careless of reputation ; neglectful of the promptings of poetry and the beautiful

<sup>1</sup> “Literary Remains,” Vol. i. p. 393.—E. J. A.

world of the imagination ; and eager to communicate to all men the results won with great difficulty and life-long labour ; cannot but fill us with wonder and love. Though we may rest satisfied with the wisdom of our Butler and our Paley,<sup>1</sup> and cannot feel much sympathy with minds that demand more ; yet admiration we must feel towards one so earnest, so devoted, whose days were spent in the endeavour, beset with incommunicable difficulties, to reconcile the logical subtleties of an extraordinary intellect with the child's pure heart and simple, loving, trustful hope. . . .

Yet, that the man who has been driven to and fro in the dark ocean of scepticism, should find a resting-place for the soles of his feet, were it even in the mysticism of Coleridge, is assuredly no unmixed evil. Leave him to himself—leave him to the guidance of the higher than himself—he may yet, as Coleridge, be born again and become even as a little child. We remember the words of the world-worn poet on his death-bed—

“In Christ I live ! in Christ I draw the breath  
Of the true life !”—

we remember these solemn words, and are filled with hopefulness. Scepticism is like a blighting and terrible madness, and it is long before one who

<sup>1</sup> This sentence has perhaps some indirect reference to the particular complexion of orthodoxy prevalent at Trinity College, Dublin, at the time the essay was written.—ED.

has been so weirdly visited can regain his right mind. . . . To many a one already has the philosophy of Coleridge been as the chink of light in the cavern of Trophonius. . . .

The eloquence of Coleridge's prose is in general that of the poet, the man of imagination, rather than that of the orator or the philosopher. It is redundant in metaphor, simile, and illustration, even in its obscurest passages. His aphorisms are perfect poems in miniature. His criticisms are of a rare order, being constructive, synthetical rather than analytical, presenting before us characters, incidents, and scenes in new and living colours, with great subtlety, complexity, and illustrative affluence. His rhetoric, when rising into passion, reminds us of Jeremy Taylor more than any other writer. It has something of the same loud organ-music, something of the same whirl and rush of images and abstractions,—the same imaginative colouring pervading and vivifying all. The mind of Coleridge is eminently a poetic mind, expressing its most abstruse notions in analogies, incarnating itself always in forms suggested by the fancy and the imagination. This, more than any other cause, is the secret of his frequent obscurity. His style often resembles the luxuriant growth of a South American forest. It has very little of the clear cutting and definite outline of the conceptions of the Greek philosophers, or the naked distinctness of the metaphysicians of France and England.

Of his political opinions, which were in early life radical, but afterwards subsided into a moderate conservatism ; of his friendships with Wordsworth, Southey, Lamb, Hazlitt, De Quincey, Scott, and others ; of his domestic life ; of his children ; of his struggles with poverty and pain ; of his many great projects abandoned from want of the means or the physical energy to carry them into execution ; of these and many other points it would be interesting to treat, as well as useful. But within these limits it is better to be silent than superficial ; and, in truth, the life, character, and works of Coleridge would require many essays, to be adequately and satisfactorily discussed.

And now the conclusion of the whole matter is this : that Coleridge was a great and good man, who, whatever may have been the errors of his head, preserved a pure heart and gentle, loving spirit ; a Christian in thought and in word, a Christian in the main tenor of his deeds ; who never suffered himself to forget that life was given him for a great and solemn purpose, to which he dedicated all his glorious talents ; who felt "the immeasurable world" continually through all the obstacles of the flesh, and laboured incessantly by his voice and by his pen to communicate that deep feeling to his brother-men ; an earnest pleader ; an untiring preacher ; a prophet of strong tempestuous soul ; an indefatigable labourer in his Master's vineyard ; a good and faith-

ful servant of Christ. A man whose whole life was one protest against the frivolities which blind us to the reality that is around us. A man whose insight pierced to the centre of many mysteries; who called upon us continually to be earnest and active, in the feeling of the presence of Him who holds all the universe in the palm of His hand. No miserable ambition, no paltry craving after fame, ever seduced him from the way he had chosen. No weakness, no distraction, ever spread a film over the eyes of his spirit. He stood, as it were, in the immediate presence of the Infinite.


“Lume è lassù, che visibile face  
Lo Creatore a quella creatura,  
Che solo in lui vedere ha la sua pace.”—DANTE.

REMARKS  
ON SOME OF THE CHARACTERS  
IN WORDSWORTH'S POEMS.

**A**MONG the many dull and brilliant things uttered at the recent banquet of the Royal Literary Fund Society, at St. James's Hall,<sup>1</sup> an observation of Earl Russell, a man who has spent most of his years toiling in the dark mines of diplomacy and statecraft, is not the least deserving [of remembrance]. The noble lord, in proposing the toast "Prosperity to English Literature," remarked as follows:—"The skill with which our authors of dramas, novels, and romances impress their fictitious personages on our minds is something marvellous. Every one, I am sure, will find on reflection that he is far better acquainted, for example, with such fictitious characters as Don Quixote and Sancho Panza than with Julius Cæsar or the Duke of Marlborough. We know of those historical characters little but their public life—that they fought such a battle,

<sup>1</sup> The Association's Annual Dinner of 1864.—ED.

made such a speech, or established such a form of government. But as for these fictitious personages, we follow them through all their actions and trace all their domestic relations." I believe that it will be found on consideration that this remark extends to a great many more characters than those which figure on the page of history. Of our acquaintances we know very little, after all ; of our relatives, not much ; of our dearest friends, certainly not all that we could wish to know. After the closest study, the most, generally, that we can ascertain of any character is what phases it would be most likely to assume under certain given circumstances. Even here our daily experience proves how liable we are to be at fault ; proves how vain it is to attempt to construct a science of human character which can be universally applied to practice ; how utterly hopeless it is, in fact, to endeavour to discover universal laws of human character applicable to particular instances. The truth is, that in life we never see a character in its entirety ; in literature, on the contrary, we do ; and what the shrewd man of the world is from the very nature of things unable to effect, must and ever will be left to the intuitive sagacity, the gifted insight, and the creative energy of the poet. No doubt, he who seeks to study character will be materially aided in his pursuit by the minute observation of the words, looks, and actions of the men he knows. But he will soon



find that this is far from sufficient. To see "the very pulse of the machine" you must laugh with Falstaff, you must weep with Lear, you must cry aloud with Hamlet in anguish and bitterness of soul. I maintain that the full realization of the characters represented in literature is one of the highest duties as well as one of the noblest functions of criticism.

I think it may be laid down as a general rule that a poet who lives in retirement from his fellow-men will draw his characters rather from an ideal pattern of his own than from the realities presented by life itself. Take Cowper, who, although unmistakably a didactic poet, depicts a great many characters after his own peculiar fashion. Such characters as the good preacher, for instance, undoubtedly exist—

"By him the violated law speaks out  
Its thunders; and by him, in strains as sweet  
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace."

But, comparing this with the general range of his characters, it is easy to see that the ideal is Cowper's own; that it is a favourite ideal of his, to which he seeks to conform his other characters rather than to take men as they really are, with their inexplicable varieties, "their mingled yarn—good and ill together." Thus, take the description of the retired gentleman in his garden; the farmer's daughter; the man whom grace makes free; Evander,



“famed for piety, for years  
Deserving honour, but for wisdom more;”

and many others *ad libitum*: they are each a variation of the one original theme—models from the one ideal pattern, not pictures taken from the living crowd. Then, look at Shakespeare, the self-made man, the man who piloted his bark over the billows of a stormy life, and, making all due deductions for the colossal height of his intellect, look merely at the *method* of his representation of character. Every one of his characters differs from the rest throughout the whole of that marvellous range of beings from Dogberry to Hamlet. If circumstances had conspired to place Shakespeare without the pale of that minute and extensive observation of men which he most undoubtedly possessed and exercised, is it fanciful to conclude that, instead of being the world's greatest of dramatists as well as its most profound of philosophical, introspective, and indeed didactic, poets, he would only be venerated as the latter? If he had lived laureate of Charlcote, would he have been supplied with the framework of that stupendous fabric, the basements of which were not only thought and reason, but study and observation likewise? Deem not that from the winding stream of Avon, and its swelling knolls, with their browsing cattle and their frisking deer, came forth the inspiration that conceived the tragedy of *Macbeth*, with its intricate complexities of

thought and action, its variety of character, and its vivid thrusts of irony and passion which an unfleshed sword could never deal.

Wordsworth is a great didactic poet, who, although he has evolved the didactic element in a great variety of forms, including the philosophical and the narrative poem, the lyric, the ballad, the sonnet, and the ode, has invariably made it his aim not only to please, but to instruct. In the exposition of his poetico-philosophic views, Wordsworth has largely employed the vehicle of representation of character. As he says himself, a great part of *The Excursion* is constructed in *something* of a dramatic mould. The characters in many places unfold themselves through the medium of their own words, as in a drama; the lines of the delineations are precise and distinct; the men and women stand before us in living flesh and blood; they are no mere poetical abstractions. Our consciousness of this latter fact is liable to fall into the background, from the preponderance of the philosophical element over the purely poetic; but a little self-examination will convince us that it exists. I think we are familiar with the Poet's reverend friend, that very questionable and much questioned Pedlar, who constitutes the central figure of *The Excursion*. Surely we have been touched by the sorrows of the poor cottager Margaret. Have we not throbbled in some secret pulse in listening to the Solitary,


talking in his bitter moods of passion and of gloom? Have we not been subdued by the contemplation of that good man the Pastor, moralizing upon the vicissitudes of life in the rustic churchyard among the mountains; or bearing himself with a genial dignity in the presence of his gifted wife, with her little daughter and her two rosy boys; or lifting up solemn hands of prayer by the margin of the lake, while the sun went down in splendour and in fire? Assuredly we remember the heroic group in Rylstone Hall. Nor can we forget the Brothers, and Michael, and Joanna, and Louisa, and—may I add?—Goody Blake and Betty Foy! We really possess here a considerably extensive gallery of portraits; comprising the ancient knight in his casque and cuirass; the modern gentleman, living in retirement; the poor man of unsullied morals and patient, humble thoughtfulness; women, beautiful and noble-minded; shepherds; beggars; and little children with wide blue eyes; and, inseparable from each and from all, the well-known figure of the artist himself, who, with a charming naïveté of egotism, is ever ready to point out with delight the best passages of his pictures.

I purpose, in the first place, to examine separately some of the leading characters of Wordsworth; and, in the next place, to consider their general aspect taken collectively and in relation to the poet himself, who has associated himself with almost every one of them.

And, first, let us renew our acquaintance with our ancient friend the Pedlar. Is he an impossibility, or a reality after all? Has he merited the full amount of scorn which has been showered upon his venerable head? Has posterity ratified the sweeping condemnation passed upon him by Lord Jeffrey? I think not. There are few, I believe, who would see that character erased from the literature of our century. There are many who have laid aside the prejudices of first impressions long ago, who willingly concede that Wordsworth knew the order to which his Pedlar belonged better than they do, and who are therefore ready to take the delineation on trust as in the main accurate and truthful. I hope there are but few who have never had the good fortune to recognize philosophy in fustian. If there be any such, let him remember, however, that the Pedlar is a self-taught man, a Scotchman; born of virtuous and in every way superior parents; knowing thoroughly the few books he has read; a patient student of nature; quick-witted, observant, and naturally of a thoughtful bias; taught the lesson of self-dependence among the lonely hills in childhood. Remember, too, that he has "ground among the iron facts of life," that his days have not been those of the mere dilettante; but that he has fought with poverty foot to foot; that he has braced his sinews and developed his muscles by the long and unrelenting struggle of a life-time. Remember, also, that, as

the representation is in poetry, it must of necessity be more or less an idealization. The very fact of the existence of such an artificial medium as verse should be sufficient of itself to prove that the very essence of poetry is idealization. The Pedlar, then, is an idealization, with a solid basis of reality. Those who insist that he is merely a bodiless dream, must shut their eyes to the phenomena of Robert Burns, ploughman and exciseman; Ebenezer Elliott, worker in iron; Thomas Chatterton, charity-boy and 'prentice; together with the whole of that goodly fellowship of low-born geniuses who have fought their way from the plough and the workshop up to literary fame.

Admitting, then, the Pedlar to be the idealization of a possibility, let us review his characteristics as he reveals them himself. Those who are not ashamed to value that tenderness which is to true manliness as the foliage to the sturdy tree, those who are not so shortsighted as to confound sentiment with sentimentalism in every instance, will always love and admire the first unfolding of the Wanderer's inner nature. I know no story more simple in its pathos, more calculated to impress the reader with the exceeding beauty of a good man's character, than the episode of Margaret, which closes the first book of *The Excursion*. For a few moments let us linger over it,—not, I hope, for the last time. Look at the old man sitting, with his




grey head uncovered, on the bench of the ruined cottage,—around him, the plot of garden ground run wild, with its matted weeds and long lank slips of gooseberry-trees and currants. Listen to the manly tenderness with which he tells the story of the late occupant of the cottage. Observe the subtle analysis of sorrow manifested in his description of the Weaver's wayward moods, when his heart was slowly breaking beneath the stress of his calamities. Then recall for an instant the touching tale of Margaret's woes ; abandoned by her husband, her infants dead and gone ; as every Sabbath day comes round, watching wearily, in the agonizing heart-sickness of hope deferred, if peradventure he might return whom she had lost. And, if a dog passed by, she would quit the shade and look around.

“ Yet ever as there passed  
 A man whose garments showed the soldier's red,  
 Or crippled mendicant in sailor's garb,  
 The little child who sate to turn the wheel  
 Ceased from his task ; and she with faltering voice  
 Made many a fond enquiry ; and when they,  
 Whose presence gave no comfort, were gone by,  
 Her heart was still more sad. And by yon gate,  
 That bars the traveller's road, she often stood,  
 And when a stranger horseman came, the latch  
 Would lift, and in his face look wistfully :  
 Most happy, if, from aught discovered there  
 Of tender feeling, she might dare repeat  
 The same sad question.”

Why do I delay over what everybody has read

scores of times? Simply because there are many still who join in heedless outcry against this noble character, and I would put it to them whether the narrator of that story is not entitled to their unqualified respect, as one who has reached the full height and breadth of manliness, retaining still the purity and simplicity of a child's heart. The episode is, in truth, an *experimentum crucis*. Those who, after seriously reading it, can still join in the laugh against Wordsworth's Pedlar, may be indeed severely self-consistent, but they cannot claim our respect for an extraordinary amount of generosity of heart or for the moral power of appreciating excellence of disposition in an unexpected phase.

Thomas De Quincey, it is true, has spoken slightly and irreverently of this story, and in his remarks upon it has evinced that cold glitter of cleverness, that unscrupulous and uncompromising habit of hard-hitting, which has more than once marred the effect of the finest eulogiums he has pronounced upon his friends. "Perhaps," says De Quincey, "it may be allowable to ask the philosophic wanderer, who washes the case of Margaret with so many coats of metaphysical varnish, but ends with finding all unavailing, 'Pray, amongst your other experiments, did you ever try the effect of a guinea?'" The objection is flippant, and indeed utterly unworthy of De Quincey. What! would Mr. De Quincey, in the presence of such hopeless agony as Mar-



garet's, coolly take out his purse, extract a guinea, and, laying it benevolently on the table at which the lost husband had so often sat, bid the poor wretched sufferer "Be happy!" This is, certainly, the newest nostrum for the heartache. Sympathy, consolation, friendship, all have been tried by men and women of intellectual attainments less dazzling than Mr. De Quincey's, and with more or less success. The philosophy and experience of the English Opium-eater have laboured and brought forth this vast result:—If the heart of a poor woman has been broken by the desertion of her husband and the death of her babe, never mind sympathy or condolence or any such vulgar remedies; her husband and her infant are to her just worth one guinea; therefore, if you can prevail upon your acquisitiveness to relinquish that paltry sum, you will restore her to precisely the same condition of happiness as that from which she has fallen! Behold, benevolence is cheap! Mr. De Quincey has fixed the value of a husband and child at twenty-one shillings! A tariff of the relative values of all human relationships may now be drawn up by any one who chooses to take the trouble of making a simple arithmetical calculation! But what if your benevolent philosopher happen not to be overburthened with a superfluity of guineas? Alas for our friend the grey-haired Wanderer! He is, after all, only a pedlar; and pedlars, as a rule, can rarely afford to be liberal in



the matter of guineas. "Well, then, at all events," says Mr. De Quincey, "he might have written to the Horse-Guards. Margaret's husband had enlisted in a regiment going abroad ;—her philosophic friend might at least have written to the War-Office and found out where the regiment was quartered." Well, perhaps he might. It is by no means improbable that he did. Wordworth says neither yes nor no ; and the *onus probandi* lies with Mr. De Quincey. But, I contend that a slight examination of the story will convince any person who has taken notice of the phenomena of human sorrow, that Margaret, even if she *had* written to her husband, would have been very unlikely to receive an answer. It is perfectly apparent from the narrative that calamity had bred a long estrangement between the poor Weaver and his wife—


"His good humour soon  
Became a weight in which no pleasure was :  
And poverty brought on a petted mood  
And a sore temper : day by day he drooped ;  
And he would leave his work—and to the town  
Would turn without an errand his slack steps ;  
Or wander here and there among the fields.  
One while he would speak lightly of his babes,  
And with a cruel tongue : at other times  
He tossed them with a false unnatural joy :  
And 't was a rueful thing to see the looks  
Of the poor innocent children. 'Every smile,'  
Said Margaret to me, here beneath these trees,  
'Made my heart bleed.'"

Now listen to what Margaret says about his departure. He had gone away, without note of warning, to join a marching regiment, leaving no token behind him except a small packet of coins. "He left me thus," says Margaret—

"he could not gather heart  
To take a farewell of me; for he feared  
That I should follow with my babes, and sink  
Beneath the misery of that wandering life."


I think it is sufficiently evident from this that the man had become a confirmed melancholic, that he had deliberately chosen, by a single act of cowardice, to cut asunder the ties of family for ever; that Margaret's case was indeed hopeless; and that therefore the story is perfectly self-consistent, and Mr. De Quincey's cavil null and void.

"But you will permit me to call your attention to a very suspicious circumstance," says Mr. De Quincey. "Had any one of us discharged the duties of coroner in Margaret's neighbourhood, he would have found it his duty to hold an inquest upon the body of her infant. The child evidently died of neglect. It cried; but finally hushed itself to sleep. That," says Mr. De Quincey triumphantly, "that looks like a case of Dalby's carminative." I admit that the case against Margaret is supported by just the single grain of dust in the balance of circumstantial evidence that would be sufficient to procure



her condemnation before such a tribunal as the *Fehm-gerichte*. But I deny that any such suspicion could possibly enter the mind of the candid reader. Why, her whole character is one of the simplest gentleness and of the purest tenderness; humble, and kind, and altogether womanly. Her only fault was that she loved too well. Wordsworth's Margaret kill her babe with neglect! Infanticide against *her* would be the very last charge to enter the designs of a *Fouché*! I think, therefore, Mr. De Quincey's objections may be dismissed without irreverence, as a *very* minute confection of argument wrapped in a tissue-paper of brilliant rhetoric.

As another illustration of what a fine conception this character is, I take the passages which describe his interviews with the Solitary: for in these the two characters are brought closely together, and the one serves in a great measure as a foil to the other. Granting it to be possible that there should exist a mountaineer of pure morals and of refined susceptibilities, of a cultured mind and of a philosophical habit of thought, there is no avenue among rustic employments which would so surely lead him to a practical knowledge of mankind as the profession of a pedlar. Let it be recollected that peddling does not merely consist in haggling with old women about the price of calico, and in laying subtle snares for the cupidity of maidens by the artistic eulogy of



ribbons.<sup>1</sup> In a mountain district some years since (before locomotion rendered every commodity accessible in all parts of England), the pedlar had access to every hearth, and his approach was welcomed by every household. Wordsworth compares him to the minstrel in the days of yore, everywhere received with hearty welcome, and "from his long journeyings and eventful life" enabled to draw conclusions deep and wise. Like the *colporteur* of the Vaudois Valleys, or the wayfaring tailor of Brittany, he was recognized and respected as the travelled man, the man who had seen the world, the news-monger and *savant* of his native Boeotia. Now, suppose him to be really a superior man, a "mute, inglorious Milton," a member of that large unrecognized class whose representatives are Burns, and Hogg, and Béranger, and the wonder of Wordsworth's Pedlar vanishes. In his particular calling he would enjoy advantages which others of his class could never realize. If he were a ploughman, he would be doomed to follow his plough for the greater portion of his day; if he were a shepherd, he would dream on the hills and watch his flocks, isolated, and without much opportunity of communicating his impressions; if he were a labourer, he would spend most of his time over his spade or his

<sup>1</sup> As "Will you buy any tape,  
Or lace for your cape,  
My dainty duck, my dear-a?"—ED.

axe. But let him be a pedlar, and he will become intimate with the inner life and history of every family for miles around. You see that the selection of a pedlar as the most favourable specimen of the cultured peasant, was no mere caprice of Wordsworth's; and that because the poet has not thought proper to write a preface explaining the existence of his Pedlar,<sup>1</sup> it does not follow that his Pedlar is an inexplicable phenomenon. For the rest of this

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth never did write a "preface explaining the existence of his Pedlar," but his own defence in the note to "The Excursion," written, with others, for circulation among his friends, and published after his death, is well known:—

"Had I been born in a class which would have deprived me of what is called a liberal education, it is not unlikely that, being strong in body, I should have taken to a way of life such as that in which my Pedlar passed the greater part of his days. At all events, I am here called upon freely to acknowledge that the character I have represented in his person is chiefly an idea of what I fancied my own character might have become in his circumstances. Nevertheless, much of what he says and does had an external existence that fell under my own youthful and subsequent observation. An individual named Patrick, by birth and education a Scotchman, followed this humble occupation for many years, and afterwards settled in the town of Kendal. He married a kinswoman of my wife's, and her sister Sarah was brought up from her ninth year under this good man's roof. My own imaginations I was happy to find clothed in reality, and fresh ones suggested, by what she reported of this man's tenderness of heart, his strong and pure imagination, and his solid attainments in literature, chiefly religious whether in prose or verse. At Hawkshead also, while I was a schoolboy, there occasionally resided a Packman (the

paper I shall suppose him to be explained ; and, in order to avoid tautology or the vulgarity of terming him "an itinerant vendor of small wares," let us henceforth call him, as Wordsworth does, by the more poetical and high-sounding title of "The Wanderer."


Well, then, the Wanderer has become practised in the difficult lore of the human heart, in the course of a life-long intercourse with men ; and in his conversations with the Solitary this knowledge is wonderfully displayed. The character of the Solitary is a magnificent conception, and as such it is justly praised by De Quincey. "The narrative of this misanthrope is grand and impassioned ; not creeping by details and minute touches, but rolling through capital events, and uttering its pathos through great representative abstractions. Nothing can be finer than when, upon the desolation of his household, upon the utter emptying of his domestic chambers by the successive deaths of children and youthful wife, just at that moment the mighty phantom of the

name then generally given to persons of this calling) with whom I had frequent conversations on what had befallen him, and what he had observed, during his wandering life ; and, as was natural, we took much to each other : and, upon the subject of *Pedlarism* in general, as *then* followed, and its favourableness to an intimate knowledge of human concerns, not merely among the humbler classes of society, I need say nothing here in addition to what is to be found in the 'Excursion,' and a note attached to it."—ED.

French Revolution rises solemnly above the horizon ; even then, even by this great vision, new earth and new heavens are promised to human nature ; and suddenly the solitary man, translated by the frenzy of human grief into the frenzy of supernatural hopes, adopts these radiant visions for the darlings whom he has lost—

‘ Society becomes his glittering bride,  
And airy hopes his children.’ ”

So far, I think, we are bound to agree with De Quincey. Perhaps, too, we may agree with him that the Solitary, “the sneering sceptic, who has actually found solace in Voltaire’s *Candide*, may never be restored to the benignities of faith and hope by argument.” But let us bear in mind that when scepticism is the natural offspring of reason, argument *must* be at least one of the conditions of a restoration to belief. Let us bear in mind, too, that argument is not the only influence brought into play in the instance before us. Want of confidence in the virtue of mankind was the door through which the Solitary entered the cold and gloomy realm of Unbelief. Now, observe that his confidence in mankind is gradually restored by the influences brought to bear upon him in the course of the Excursion. His despondency is at first gently reproved by the Wanderer. A soothing and friendly conversation leads him to pour forth the



story of his life. He ends the narrative with a comparison of his life to a mountain-brook, whirling in tumult and struggle through the labyrinths of the crags, sometimes the unruffled mirror of the trees and rocks and azure sky, but mostly roaring and seething in foam—


“Such a stream  
Is human Life : and so the Spirit fares  
In the best quiet to its course allowed ;  
And such is mine,—save only for a hope  
That my particular current soon will reach  
The unfathomable gulf, where all is still.”

We must notice that, as these last notes of despondency die away, the mourner is greeted with the kindest sympathy and the tenderest compassion. We must notice the tact and skill with which the subject of the French Revolution is handled by his interlocutors. “We too,” they exclaim,—“we too cherished that golden hope ; we too have seen it trodden into powder : yet our faith in mankind has not died ; our grand belief in the destinies of our race, once rudely shaken though it were, has not perished. We believe still : why will not you likewise believe ? Let us wait. Let us acknowledge the necessity of patience and fortitude with respect to the great revolutions of the world !” . . . Again, at this point, will be reiterated, I doubt not, an echo of the old cry—“The thing is simply impossible ! How could a pedlar philosophize thus ? Pedlars



do n't think logically about French Revolutions ! Pedlars do n't deal in sesquipedalian words !" . . My good sir, will you answer me this question once for all ?—What has the fact of his being a pedlar to do with the matter ? I tell you, the man is an educated peasant, a man of genius in the guise of a worker for his daily bread. Your *à priori* argument rests on a gratuitous assumption. What ! Burns was not a poet, because he was a ploughman ? Shakespeare was not the dramatist of all time, because he was a strolling player and shareholder of the Blackfriars Theatre in Playhouse Yard ? Nay, even Wordsworth could never by any possibility have written *The Excursion*, forasmuch as he was a civil servant of His Majesty, even Stamp-Distributor for the counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland ! . . . I think, too, that the scene of domestic bliss and of humble and simple piety to which the Solitary is introduced in the family of the Pastor, is in itself a better argument for him than "logical quillet or metaphysical conundrum." And here we must pass gradually from the consideration of the Solitary to that of the Pastor, as we passed before from the Wanderer to the Solitary.

As an appeal to the mind of the Solitary, we cannot but be impressed with the solemnity of the churchyard scene, where the Pastor gives, with fond affection and deep-rooted faith, the portraits of the dead whom he had known in life. The Solitary



denies the praise of virtue to worth of the simple yeoman's kind ; but he is evidently touched, and touched deeply, by the narrative. Here, then, is one step decidedly gained. Then, the stories which the Pastor tells are almost all stories of suffering,—unrequited love meekly endured, anguish of mind subdued by nature's kindly influences ; all of them stories wherefrom the man of gloom is gently led to draw this moral—"Weak heart, why wilt *thou* always be heavy-laden, whose woes are not more keen than ours ? Look forth upon the world of human suffering, and weep not for thine own solitary woes : come forth among thy brother-men, and learn the divinity of sorrow in health-giving toil !"—

The character of the Pastor is drawn by Wordsworth after a very lofty ideal—an ideal of the English clergyman which he has expressed in these memorable words :—

"Ministers

Detached from pleasure, to the love of gain  
Superior, insusceptible of pride,  
And by ambition's longings undisturbed ;  
Men whose delight is where their duty leads  
Or fixes them ; whose least distinguished day  
Shines with some portion of that heavenly lustre,  
Which makes the sabbath lovely in the eyes  
Of blessed angels, pitying human cares."

The ideal is indeed a lofty one, although cases in which it is nearly realized will be found in many

persuasions. The character of the Pastor in *The Excursion* is intended to fulfil this ideal. The series of narratives related by him exhibits the benevolence of his character ; but these narratives exhibit more than this ; they let us into the private life of Wordsworth himself. The story of the solitary miner ; of the flaming Jacobite and his friend the sullen Hanoverian ; of the proud, weird mother and her dissolute son ; of Ellen, the cottage girl ; of Wilfred Armathwaite ; of the charitable clergyman and his family ; of the young peasant ; and the other stories which the Pastor tells ; are " simple annals " indeed, but they display a minute acquaintance with the middle and poorer classes. Such an acquaintance as the ideal Pastor is represented as possessing Wordsworth himself actually possessed. He knew the peasantry of his native hills heart and soul ; his heart throbbed with their hearts, his spirit could sympathize with their smallest cares. Yes, we have here the true secret of the mechanism of *The Excursion*. The Wanderer, the Solitary, the Pastor, each is but a separate phase of William Wordsworth himself, the large-hearted, high-souled, pure-minded worshipper through nature of nature's God ; the calm and strong philosopher of few moods, dispassionately thoughtful now, again yielding for a time to an intellectual despondency at the vast distance of his grand ideal, again supporting himself by the sublime enthusiasm which

marked him out from among men. What the characters of Byron are to Byron himself the characters of Wordsworth are to Wordsworth. They are the facets of a single precious gem.

Leaving *The Excursion* with reluctance, I pass to that fine eclogue *The Brothers*, as the transition is easy to the central character in this poem from the Pastor of *The Excursion*. One would think the two characters were identical. There is the same acquaintance with the inner life of the peasantry, the same benevolence of disposition, the same activity for good. The homely priest of Ennerdale is another of Wordsworth's conceptions of what the country parson ought to be—another normal clergyman after Wordsworth's favourite pattern. Leonard, again, and Walter Ewbank, and James—why, they are all (if I may be pardoned the use of a beautiful colloquial expression) “as good as gold;” like the Wanderer, the Solitary, and the Pastor, whatever may be their errors, they are men of high principle and unsullied morals; “model men,” in fact, far more than average specimens of the human race, with its wondrous complexity of good and ill.

A few more examples will be sufficient to illustrate the theory from which I started, and which I shall presently state in a more concise form. Matthew, the Leech-Gatherer, Ruth, and Michael—I shall touch upon these with as much brevity as my purpose admits. Matthew is a village schoolmaster, a

grey-haired man of seventy-two; blithe and merry as a child, but evincing from time to time amidst the freshness of boyish hilarity the soberer tints of age. His is such a character as Sydney Smith's; intellectually playful; serene as a summer morning; pure in heart and strong in spirit; his brightness seldom dimmed by a passing cloud. On a beautiful April morning, as he rambles by the brooks with his friend, a sigh of pain breaks from his lips; he was thinking, amid his mirth, of the little daughter he buried thirty years before. At another time, as he lies conversing with the Poet by the brink of a gurgling rill, he suddenly breaks off from his merry mood with a lament for the days that are no more. But the purity of his life sustains him, and he never settles into a confirmed and habitual despondency. From his mouth comes the immortal exhortation, ever to be valued by those who have silently communed with nature—

“One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.”

The Leech-Gatherer is an old man, bent double with sickness and with years, who pursues his humble calling with uncomplaining patience, pacing through the weary moors continually, wandering about alone and silently. Although crushed by a long life of suffering and privation, he is courteous

and grave in his demeanour, pious and hopeful, cheerful and kindly in the midst of his pain. The Poet is wandering alone, in a fit of deep gloom, reflecting on the hard destinies of so many gifted men and coupling their fate with his own, when he meets this old man in the moorlands, stirring the muddy waters of the pool with his staff. His fortitude and independence are a practical rebuke to the despondency of the poet, and he cries—

“I could have laughed myself to scorn to find  
In that decrepit man so firm a mind.  
‘God,’ said I, ‘be *my* help and stay secure ;  
I’ll think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor.’”

Ruth is a pure-minded and innocent girl, who has been wooed and won by a rustic Othello. She is abandoned by her spouse, and goes mad in consequence ; but she retains her innocence and purity to the last. Old Michael is a character of the same high moral type as the others which I have cited. Frugal, honest, and hard-working, he tends his sheep upon the mountains, and all his soul is centered in an only son. He is obliged to part with his firstborn, and they make a covenant together, with the solemn simplicity of the old patriarchal times, the son laying the corner-stone of a sheep-fold, to be finished by the father ere his return. The stripling promises to keep ever fresh in his mind the memory of his forefathers’ pure lives, and as a token of his pledge he lays the first stone in its

resting-place. At the sight the old man's grief breaks from him; he presses his son to his heart, and kisses him, and weeps. But the youth soon loses himself in evil courses in the dissolute city, and at last is obliged to seek a hiding-place from the law beyond the seas. Old Michael's heart is broken; but his purity sustains him. For seven years he works at the building of his sheepfold, and leaves it unfinished when he dies.

Reviewing the representative characters of Wordsworth's poems at a glance, we cannot fail to perceive that there is one characteristic common to them all. The Wanderer, the Solitary, the Pastor, Matthew, the Leech-Gatherer, Michael, Susan, Louisa, Leonard, almost all of them have one peculiarity in common. They are all persons of pure and unblemished morality. More or less in this they resemble Wordsworth himself. This fact may be accounted for by Wordsworth's eminent want of the dramatic faculty, as well as by the peculiar life he led, from choice, circumstance, and temperament. His tragedy of *The Borderers* is an unqualified failure as a drama; the personages have nothing individual about them; the plot is remarkable neither for probability nor ingenuity. And yet he incubated this production for nearly five times the period prescribed by Horace. With regard to his selection of character, in general, it has been well said, "that he has exhibited only one limited,

however lofty, region of life, and has made it his aim far less to represent what lies around him by self-transference into all its feelings, than to choose therefrom what suits his spirit of ethical meditation, and so compel mankind, out alike of their toilsome daily paths and pleasant nightly dreams, into his own severe and stately school of thought. The present movements of human life, nay, its varied and spontaneous joys, to him are little, save so far as they afford a text for a mind in which fixed will, and stern speculation, and a heart austere and measured even in its pity, are far more obvious powers than fancy, emotion, or keen and versatile sympathy. He discourses indeed with divine wisdom of life and nature, and all their sweet and various impulses ; but the impression of his own great calm judicial soul is always far too mighty for any all-powerful feeling of the objects he presents to us." . . . His friends were not more numerous or less select than his books, nor were they less thoroughly known and appreciated. They were a few great upright men, and a few intellectual women, and they were all in all to him. He lived in the great world of his own mind. . . .

And so his characters are moulded after an ideal pattern of his own, and upon the majority of them the shadow of his own great intellect is projected. How much of Coleridge exists in the Wanderer it would be a nice research to discover. How much



of the Solitary is idealized from his friend Beaupuis, the Frenchman, is a question which a careful psychological analysis might determine. He has declared himself that *The Happy Warrior* was suggested by his own brother John, the sea-captain, who was a philosopher and a poet in his own fashion while he reposed from his business in the great waters. I think Leonard in *The Brothers* is taken from the same model. He has confessed that Ruth is drawn after the character and story of an American lady whom he knew. But they are all, at the same time, so highly idealized, that it is difficult and requires effort to recognize the originals from the lineaments of the poetic pictures.

Not the less, however, is Wordsworth to be valued as an exhibitor of character because his range is limited and his selection of the purest and the best. . . . He has conferred a benefit upon literature in idealizing men, even as he has idealized nature, from a few familiar examples, not from the complex varieties of the whole. He has taken his images from his own hills, and vales, and warbling streams. He has not, like Shelley and Byron and Southey, taken a mountain from England and a cedar from Palestine, a column from Greece and a massive pile from Egypt. What he knew best he has best idealized. And in the same manner he has dealt with human character.

. . . The fact that certain intellects are not affected

by certain forms of poetry is chiefly to be ascribed to a deficiency of culture in that particular direction. For example, there are some men who admire heroism and deeds of active prowess, for whom the story of Tancred and Rinaldo would have most inspiring charms, while they reap no "harvest of a quiet eye" from the peaceful contemplation of nature which is the characteristic of some of our more modern poetry. On the other hand, there are many who, from temperament or from training, would rather "babble of green fields" with Wordsworth than allow themselves to be agitated by the trumpets and the clarions of epical poetry, the rattling of the armour and the prancing of the steeds. But the fact remains the same, that all minds are capable of being affected pleasantly by poetry of some form or other; the man of active energies by the thunder of the epic; the man of intellects and reasons by the antithetical ring of the didactic—*sermoni propiora*.

I would say to those who still find delight in the diseased sublimity of Harold and the splendid worthlessness of Juan, Read Wordsworth honestly and fairly, and be brave enough to face disappointment at first. Begin with some of the minor lyrics, and even your Byronic cravings will be satisfied. Take the song for the Wandering Jew; you will not deny, being a Byronian, that that is the *merum nectar* of poetry. Then take such a poem as this:—

“ A slumber did my spirit seal ;  
I had no human fears :  
She seemed a thing that could not feel  
The touch of earthly years.

“ No motion has she now, no force ;  
She neither hears nor sees,  
Rolled round in earth’s diurnal course  
With rocks and stones and trees ! ”

You will not deny *that* to be true poetry, or you will be false to your Byronic creed. Read the rest in some such order as this :—*Laodamia*, the poems on Louisa, the *Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle*, the lines written above Tintern Abbey ; reserving *The Excursion* for the last. And when you have learned to reverence the calm philosophy and dignified utterance of that colossal poem, you will look with a less scornful eye upon the Leech-Gatherer and the Sexton, and even upon Goody Blake and the Idiot Boy.

## SHELLEY.

THE poems of Shelley stand out in bold relief in the literature of our country. They are destined by their very nature never to become popular. Shelley is preëminently the poet of the few. But perhaps his poetry is by its nature as far removed from the doom of oblivion as it is from the chances of popularity. In the world of English literature he stands alone. He bears a superficial resemblance to but one of our English poets—Henry More, the Platonist ; but, regarded closely, this resemblance vanishes. He has neither the deep insight of Wordsworth, the fiery energy of Byron, nor the pregnant self-restraint of Tennyson. The most casual reader will perceive at a glance the absurdity of comparing him with any other of our modern poets. Keats, who is sometimes compared with him, is an innocent dreamer of day-dreams beside him.

I. There exists, no doubt, a broad line of demarcation between the class of mind which abstracts itself from its idealizations and that which exhibits alone the shifting kaleidoscope of its own suscep-

tibilities. Homer is as different from Anacreon as Chaucer from Cowley. Shelley has been repeatedly called a subjective poet. But it is obviously unjust to rank the author of *The Cenci* in this inferior category. The classification of the poets, which obtains on the Continent, into colourists and formists, is much more generally applicable, because it is more abstract. To the former class Shelley belonged eminently and exclusively. His mind was tremulously sensitive to the beauties of the external creation, and he invested them in hues and tissues not their own. He says himself that his intellect "was the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe." Hence he clothed his thoughts in language teeming with beautiful analogies. From the tranquil valley, from the snow-capt mountains, from the sea, the stars, the rivers, and the streams, from the hooded domes of modern Italy, and from the columns and statues of ancient Greece, he drew his inspiration and formed his images. So likewise have other poets; but here the similarity ends. For, while his imagination revelled in a world of poetical abstractions, varied and numerous as the divinities of the old mythologies, he neglected the study or representation of human actions and of human passions except in one or two important instances. He is emphatically a metaphysical poet [in the deeper sense of the word :] but he introduces no Fausts, no Hamlets, no Manfreds, to

exhibit by their language and their actions the inner workings of the troubled soul. Nothing but unsubstantial Alastors, Laons, Athanases, and Ianthes. His conceptions are encircled with divinest radiance; but it is a radiance which dazzles, while it imparts no genial warmth. The tortured Prometheus, emblem of the groaning and travailing creation, is unchained from his rock, and rescued from the vultures and the furies that lacerated his quivering flesh; but his release is hymned by bodiless phantoms. What care we for the silver-voiced Panthea or the purple-winged Ione? What are they to us or we to them? True that we wander in an enchanted region peopled with beautiful shadows; but we never cease to be conscious that they are only shadows. The verse now moves in stately march with a tramp of thunder, now trips along in sprightly dance, accompanied with sweetest music, "like the lascivious pleasing of a lute?" But while we are alternately struck with wonder and entranced with delight, as the bright pageant unrolls itself before our view, we feel with regret our incapacity to retain more than a confused and indistinct reminiscence of its glories. For, with all their marvellous colours, they do not possess a sufficiently tangible human interest to engrave a lasting impression. Whatever interest they possess is a purely intellectual interest, except in the case of those whose philosophy is identical with the philosophy of the Poet.

There is another point of peculiarity in Shelley. The history of his life shows that his mind overflowed with love towards his race *in the abstract*. But this noble sympathy, worthy of all admiration and respect, was counterbalanced by a hatred of those whom he imagined to be inevitably oppressors and impostors, but in whom a sound judgment will discern the sustainers and preservers without whose support the social fabric would totter to its base.

But, doubtless, his greatest peculiarity is this. He is the poet of Infidelity, and the only Englishman who has employed poetry almost exclusively as the exponent of his infidelistic principles. He is, in truth, the Lucretius of modern times. But, while Lucretius debased his genius by adopting the gross materialism of Anaxagoras and Epicurus, Shelley, on the other hand, soars into aerial regions. . . . Like Lucretius, however, in his great poem on the Nature of the Universe, his censures were not merely directed against the colossal phantom Superstition. He hurled defiance against the sacred form of Religion herself. It has been said that "to reach the regions of light, you must pass through the clouds. Some stop there ; others know how to go beyond." But Shelley caroused in the obscurities of cloudland ; suffused the beautiful unrealities with all the marvellous colouring of his teeming fancy ; and mistook the gorgeous twilight of his own soul for the full splendour of the perfect day. Piercing

the dense atmosphere of falsehood with a glance of lightning, his fine insight failed him here. He distorted the chaste and beautiful figure of Truth, and was too blind to see anything but the distortion.

\* \* \* \* \*

II. The eldest son of a Sussex baronet, Shelley was sent to school at the age of six. He was driven forth to combat with the world while yet an infant ; and most men will acknowledge that the struggle of the schoolboy is hardly paralleled in after-life. A few years later he was removed to Eton, where his resistance to authority first displayed itself in a tangible form. Obstinate refusing to fag, he was treated with cruelty by his companions and with severity by his masters. He never forgot this injustice, and he described it bitterly and passionately in the Dedication of the *Revolt of Islam*.

On his return home from Eton, he fell in love with his cousin Harriet Grove, who was on a visit at his father's house. We find mention of romantic conversations and moonlight strolls amid the shadowy woods of Strood and along the delightful coast of St. Leonard's. But the parents of Miss Grove, taking fright at the open-mouthed scepticism of the impetuous young suitor, objected to his union with their daughter : so the Poet was disappointed, and the lady got married to somebody else—another instance of a great poet having to pass through the fiery ordeal of a fruitless attachment. Who can tell




what injury this may not have done him? It may account for the utter heartlessness which endorsed his subsequent views on the subject of marriage. At all events, his theory of love from that time forward was the reverse of chivalrous, and he confirmed it by practice which it would be difficult to excuse.

Next year he went to Oxford, where his brief career may be summed up in his own words; he "incessantly speculated, thought, and read." While still a Freshman, he wrote *Queen Mab*, and distributed copies of it among his friends. This very crude production abounds with passages of trenchant satire and of plaintive sweetness, of tranquil beauty and of thrilling grandeur. Yet, after all, it is an eloquent lampoon on religion and government rather than a poem. It is as if Milton's Belial, than whom "a fairer person lost not Heaven," were to quaver forth anathemas against the Most High with the fierce, pathetic indignation of Moloch. It is the splendid blasphemy of a beautiful demon, the livid rage of a gorgeously-tinted serpent. At the time *Queen Mab* was written Shelley was an avowed sceptic and an open enemy to all constituted authority, political and ecclesiastical. He published, in conjunction with a college-friend, a volume of political squibs, entitled *My Aunt Margaret Nicholson*, purporting to have been composed by the miserable maniac who attempted the assassina-

tion of George III. He also issued a syllabus from the works of David Hume, in which he essayed to discover flaws in the current arguments for the existence of a God. At the same time he had the audacity to challenge the authorities of Oxford to a public controversy on the subject. As might have been expected, the terrible Freshman was summoned forthwith before the Council, and, on being interrogated as to his religious opinions and refusing to abandon them, was handed his sentence of expulsion.

The second Mrs. Shelley complains of the treatment which the young Poet received on this occasion with eloquence worthy of the gifted daughter of Godwin. Still it must be remembered that infidelity in Oxford was at that time not quite such a matter of course as it has since become; and it is just possible that the youth who had already hurled such fiery missiles as *Queen Mab* and *My Aunt Nicholson* at the fair bosom of his Alma Mater, may have behaved himself somewhat indiscreetly in the presence of the tribunal which condemned him. It should be observed, too, that the act was not merely a piece of youthful imprudence; it was an overt breach of university discipline; and, if it had been passed over, its results would have been disastrous to the authority of the University, and fraught with serious peril to the large body of youths whom it was delegated to protect. As a corporation, they were bound to expel



him, if merely in self-defence. As a corporation of Christian men, they might, perhaps, have overstepped the letter of their duty, and endeavoured by a course of systematic reasoning to direct him aright. The vituperation which the reviewers and biographers of Shelley have poured out upon Oxford appears to me to be the merest sentimentalism. Sympathy with the unfortunate is a truly noble feeling; but it becomes pitiable drivelling when it refuses to acknowledge the duties of the judge and the difficulties which beset his unenviable position.

If we accept Thomas De Quincey's version of this occurrence, it will appear that the treatment he received was the reverse of harsh—in fact, that he was treated with singular mildness. "Shelley," writes De Quincey, ". . . came to a resolution that he would convert, and that it was his solemn duty to convert, the universal Christian Church to Atheism or to Pantheism, no great matter *which* . . . . So first he wrote a pamphlet, clearly and satisfactorily explaining the necessity of being an Atheist; and, with his usual exemplary courage, . . . Shelley put his name to the pamphlet, and the name of his college. His ultimate object was to accomplish a general apostacy in the Christian Church of whatever name. But for one six months it was quite enough if he caused a revolt in the Church of England. And as, before a great naval action, when the enemy is approaching, you throw

a long shot or two by way of trying his range—on that principle Shelley had thrown out his tract in Oxford.” . . . Well, the heads of the colleges and halls met to deliberate upon the affair. . . . “What was to be done? Most of them were inclined to mercy; to proceed at all was to proceed to extremities; and (generally speaking) to expel a man from Oxford, is to ruin his prospects in any of the liberal professions. Not, therefore, from consideration for Shelley’s position in society, but on the kindest motives of forbearance towards one so young, the heads decided for declining all notice of the pamphlet. . . . There was a flaw (was there?) in his process; his pleading could not, regularly, come before the Court. Very well—he would heal that defect immediately. So he sent his pamphlet, with five-and-twenty separate letters, to the five-and-twenty heads of the colleges in Golgotha assembled; courteously ‘inviting’ all and every of them to notify, at his earliest convenience, his adhesion to the enclosed unanswerable arguments for Atheism. Upon this, it is undeniable that Golgotha looked black; and, after certain formalities, ‘invited’ P. B. Shelley to consider himself expelled from the University. . . . The authorities of Oxford, *deeply responsible to the nation in a matter of so much peril*, could not have acted otherwise than they did. . . . There were many men in Oxford who knew the standing of Shelley’s family. Already it was whis-

pered that any man of obscure connections would have been visited for his Atheism, whether writing to Golgotha or not. . . . *They* were not severe. The severity was extorted and imposed by Shelley himself."

Being disowned by his father and discarded by his friends, Shelley, in a state of considerable pecuniary embarrassment, now turned his steps towards London, where he became acquainted with "a very handsome girl," named Harriet Westbrook, the daughter of a retired coffeehouse-keeper of Cockayne. Having received an allowance from Sir Timothy of £200 a-year, he eloped with Harriet from London. She was at this time only sixteen years of age,—three years younger than himself. From London [they] went successively to Edinburgh, York, and Keswick, at which latter place they made a sojourn of some months. Here, amidst the enchanting scenery of the English Lakes, they became acquainted with Robert Southey and Thomas De Quincey. . . . The friendship which Shelley formed [at this time] with the celebrated author of *Political Justice* [Godwin] was firm and lasting, and exercised an important influence on the future destinies of the Poet.

From Keswick the Shelleys proceeded to Dublin. . . . The youthful enthusiast, with his usual precipitancy, determined to enlist his active sympathies on the side of Irish patriotism. He would strike off the fetters which bound the young Hibernia ! He

would raise the standard of revolution, and assert by force the claims of the enslaved nation to liberty ! He would establish a national government on the principles of equal rights and universal toleration, and would prove before the incredulous world how immeasurable is the superiority of national and individual freedom over the legitimate despotism of established power ! The fragile and eloquent Laon would rouse to vengeance the nation crouching under its oppressors, and would shake the Golden City to its foundations ! . . . However, the would-be champion of Irish grievances, the would-be vindicator of Irish nationality, was destined never to carry into execution the magnificent programme he had conceived. On one occasion, in addressing a meeting of "patriots" in a strain of animated oratory, he happened to remark that, according to *his* political creed, Protestants were entitled to equal privileges with Catholics. Instantly a chorus of savage yells and horrible imprecations burst from the lips of the assembled tatterdemalions, and the advocate of toleration was in imminent peril of having his life sacrificed to the cause which he had so imprudently embraced. It was with considerable difficulty that he escaped uninjured ; and the police, alarmed for his personal safety, urged upon him the necessity of immediate departure from the unhappy country which he had hoped to restore to freedom and independence. The mis-

taken philanthropist, baffled in his attempt to regenerate a people whose history may be characterized as one long complaint of external oppression and internal dissension, turned his face to that happier country whose Church and whose State he looked upon with feelings of indignation and abhorrence.

Passing successively through the Isle of Man, North Wales, and Devonshire, he ultimately hired a cottage in Tanyralt, Caernarvonshire, where he performed one of those acts of munificent benevolence of which his brief career affords us [some] striking examples. The labourers of the immediate vicinity were in a deplorable state of distress, by reason of the frequent "incursions of the sea" upon the earthen embankments by which their cottages were but poorly and insufficiently protected. Shelley subscribed £500 for their relief, and "personally solicited" contributions on their behalf from the neighbouring gentry. His charity did not stop here. It is related by one of his own biographers, on unquestionable authority, that he used to "visit" the needy cottagers "in their homes," and that he furnished them, "during the cold winter months," with a supply of "food, clothes, and fuel."

At Tanyralt an atrocious and unwarrantable attack was made on the life and property of the Poet. One night in February, 1813, while a fearful storm was raging, a man entered the house, fired at Shelley,

knocked him down, struggled with him on the ground, and, being probably wounded in the scuffle, fled, uttering an oath of vengeance. Three hours afterwards the assassin made his appearance a second time, and fired again at Shelley, who this time narrowly escaped with his life, as his night-gown was pierced with the shot. However, on the prompt appearance of a man-servant, the ruffian took to flight without attempting further violence. This circumstance, among others, induced the Shelleys to leave Wales immediately for Ireland. On this occasion they visited the Lakes of Killarney, and, after a short stay in that beautiful [neighbourhood], returned to London, where Mrs. Shelley gave birth to a daughter, Ianthe. [In July] of the year [1814], Shelley separated from his wife. . . .


In the old churchyard of St. Pancras, a young girl of sixteen stood mourning and meditating beside the grave of her mother, who had died in giving her birth. That mother was Mary Wollstonecraft, the wife of William Godwin, and the authoress of *The Rights of Women*. The daughter had inherited her mother's name, and with it a large portion of her mother's nature. Talented, well-educated, and accomplished, she united the strong mind and firm character peculiar to each of her parents with a warm heart, a gentle disposition, and a fine and delicate sensibility. Brought up in accordance with the severe principles which form the



basis of her father's historical, political, and fictitious writings, the evil effects which might otherwise have ensued from this peculiar discipline were counteracted by the strong natural bias of a sound reason and an enlarged imagination. She had often heard from her father of the genius, the principles, and the misfortunes of Shelley; and she had wept in secret as she recounted to herself the severity with which he had been treated, and the sufferings which he had undergone. She had been introduced to him, and she had been haunted by his voice, and the lustre of his spirit-thrilling eyes. She had become acquainted with him, and had been strangely attracted by his eloquence and his genius. Shelley seemed to her to be the impersonation of the noblest of those principles with which, in her childhood, her mind had been imbued, and which, as she ripened into womanhood, she had inseparably associated with sentiment and romance.

As the young girl stood mourning by her mother's grave, she became aware of the presence of the object of her affections. There, among the solemn tombs, and over the mossy graves, the Poet poured forth in impassioned language the story of his love, and there, beneath the grey church-tower, his appeal was heard with favour, and the lovers plighted mutual faith.

This event took place in the year 1814, and in the same year the lovers proceeded to Switzerland;



visited the most celebrated of its scenes ; and, on their way home, sailed below the crags and castled steeps of the Rhine. There can be little doubt that this circumstance contributed in no small degree to the grandeur and magnificence of the descriptive passages in *Alastor*, which poem was composed shortly after Shelley's return to England.

Owing to his delicate state of health, it was deemed advisable that he should travel about a little through the country ; and, after having visited the caves and bights of Devonshire, and sojourned amidst the delightful scenery of dale and river at Clifton, he took up his abode ultimately on the borders of Windsor Forest. The stately and time-honoured towers of William of Wykeham, the frescoes of Verrio, the busts of Chantrey, the tapestries of Gobelin, the portraits of Vandyke, Lely, Kneller, and Lawrence, and, above all, the silver Thames and the wild and magnificent woodland, along with the memories of Continental grandeur, were the inspiration of *Alastor*.

In 1816, Shelley again visited Switzerland, and at Geneva he made the acquaintance of Lord Byron, who was then in the meridian of his fame. The two poets amused themselves principally with boating-excursions on the waters of Lake Lemman. Shelley had always been a passionate lover of this kind of amusement, and we find evidence of his passion in *Alastor* and in the *Revolt of Islam*. Southey's

*Thalaba* was one of his favourite poems, chiefly, we have reason to believe, on account of the river-voyage described in that wild Arabian fiction. It is a significant fact, that, although Shelley and Byron became acquainted under such agreeable circumstances, and although their acquaintance continued until they were separated by death, yet the two poets were never cordially attached to one another as friend to friend. Shelley conceived himself inferior in power and genius to Lord Byron. Lord Byron has declared in one of his letters that, although he admired and esteemed Shelley, he never entertained towards him a feeling of sincere friendship. The truth seems to be that Shelley's philosophy was too shadowy, too ethereal, to suit either the taste or the sound common-sense of Byron. Nor, indeed, was the author of *Don Juan* a person likely to appreciate the mind which produced the sublime drama of *Prometheus*. Shelley was an idealist ; Byron was a materialist. Shelley, however bitter and acrimonious in his assaults on religion and government, was a greater Utopian than Sir Thomas More himself. Byron, on the contrary, was the prototype of his own Childe Harold, a cynic of the deepest dye.

During the period of this second tour in Switzerland, Shelley composed his wonderful lines on *Mont Blanc* and his not less wonderful *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. The former of these poems was conceived among the pine-forests and the glaciers

of Chamouni, and is a transcript of the Poet's reflections as he stood in that sublime Alpine valley, with the Arve and Arveiron rolling their loud waters at his feet, and the eternal snows of the White Mountain gleaming high above.

Towards the close of the year Shelley returned to England, and on the 30th of December his marriage with Mary Godwin took place. Shortly after his marriage he retired with his bride to Marlow, in Buckinghamshire, where he composed his longest and most imperfect poem, *The Revolt of Islam*. The poem was issued under the title of *Laon and Cythna ; or, the Revolution of the Golden City: A Vision of the Nineteenth Century*. But, as it was very naturally and reasonably feared that dangerous consequences might ensue, both to the author and to the publisher, unless many of the passages contained in the poem should undergo considerable "modification," Shelley, after oscillating for a time between the dictates of prudence and the suggestions of literary pride, finally submitted his poem to an entire process of reconstruction. It appeared, accordingly, in the early part of 1818, in twelve cantos composed in the Spenserian stanza, under the title of *The Revolt of Islam*.

The dark tinge of melancholy passion which pervades this extraordinary poem can be traced in great measure to the anguish which at this period weighed upon the Poet's spirit. The unfortunate

woman who had been the companion of his youth and early manhood had brought her miserable career to an untimely close by self-destruction. Her father, Mr. Westbrook, had obtained from Lord Eldon a decree of Chancery, depriving Shelley of the care of his two children, on the ground of his alleged immorality and atheism. The children were put in Chancery, and, being entrusted to the charge of an Anglican divine, were, of course, indoctrinated "in principles which were held in aversion by their unhappy father." Shelley felt the blow keenly. It confirmed him irrevocably in his hatred of constituted power. He wrote an eloquent and indignant letter to Lord Chancellor Eldon. His biographers have complained loudly of the severity of the sentence. Lord Eldon, however, justified his judgment by the following argument:—"Mr. Shelley long ago published and maintained the doctrine that marriage is a contract binding only during mutual pleasure. He has carried out that doctrine in his own practice. He has done nothing to show that he does not maintain it. And I consider such practice injurious to the best interests of society."

Now, the question seems to stand thus:—A man holds and practices doctrines "injurious to the best interests of society." He publishes these doctrines, and is attached to them with a fanatical fervour. It is to be presumed that he will instruct his children in these doctrines, if permitted. Is, then, a legally

constituted protector of the interests of society justifiable in permitting the children to be so instructed? If not, how can he hinder the mischief, if appealed to, except by withdrawing the children from the immediate influence of the father? If a bigamist is allowed to train up his children in his own obnoxious principles, there is an end to the protection of the law.

It was, however, the consummation of a long series of adversities which it had been [Shelley's] destiny to suffer during the plastic period of his life. It was the culminating point of his miseries and his misfortunes. He had now drunk the bitter cup of woe to its lowest dregs. But its poison had begun to mingle with his blood. The agony, as well as the disgrace, of this deprivation blasted all his prospects, and confirmed all his gloomiest views in gloom still deeper than before. The last state of the man had become worse than the first. The horizon of the future was clouded with tenfold obscurity, and the lurid lightnings that shot forth amid the darkness, from time to time, were mistaken for the first radiance of a brighter dawn. It is painful, it is even harrowing, to observe the feverish excitement of the Poet's mind at this unhappy epoch of his life, manifesting itself in the fantastic and absurd fable by which he has chosen to illustrate the overthrow of oppression, the cessation of evil, and the triumphal establishment of justice and virtue over the whole earth.

It is pleasing to be able to record a further proof of his sincerity and benevolence, while labouring under the pressure of calamities sufficient to have driven many another man to a misanthropy fierce and unrelenting. During his short residence at Marlow the distress of the lace-making population of that town was more severe than usual, owing to the failure of the harvest, the inclemency of the winter, and the increased taxation consequent upon the Peninsular War. Shelley was indefatigable in his efforts to afford relief; and, we are told, in visiting the cottages of the impoverished manufacturers, he caught "a severe attack of ophthalmia."

I have sketched rather minutely the earlier portion of Shelley's life, both because its incidents were paramount in moulding and developing his character and opinions, and because it is in the circumstances included in this period that his history differs materially from the histories of other men....

In March 1818 Shelley quitted England; "never to return." His health was in a wretched condition. He exhibited decided symptoms of pulmonary consumption. In a letter to his father-in-law, Godwin, he thus alludes to his determination to remove from the cold and dreary north to a more genial climate:—"It is not health, but life, that I should seek in Italy; and that not for my own sake—I feel that I am capable of trampling on such weakness—but for the sake of those to whom my

life may be a source of happiness, utility, security, and honour, and to some of whom my death might be all that is the reverse." Another reason for his departure from England was a vague, though perhaps not groundless, apprehension of being deprived by the Lord Chancellor of his infant son by Mary Shelley. Moreover, the ignominy with which in his native land he was overwhelmed his haughty spirit could brook no longer. In Italy, "the paradise of exiles," he was resolved to seek retirement and repose, and to bury in oblivion the calamities of his earlier days. To apply the fine image of Moschus, he would turn his face from the roaring and foaming ocean, and, amid the deep and quiet forest, he would find a solace in the murmuring of the brook and the music of the waving pines. But on his spirit a gloom of melancholy had fallen, not to be dispelled by the brightest skies or the fairest scenes of Hesperia. Milan, with its splendid cathedral and garden-like environs; Como, with its dark-blue lake and its romantic vales; Leghorn, Lucca, and Venice, that most poetic of modern cities; were visited by the Shelleys in rapid succession. From Venice they proceeded to Este, a place consecrated by many reminiscences of historic and poetic lore; and here they resided in a beautiful villa, "built on the site of a Capuchin convent," and crowning the overhanging brow of a gentle acclivity. "A slight ravine, with a road in its depth, divided



the garden from the hill, on which stood the ruins of the ancient castle of Este ; whose dark massive wall gave forth an echo, and from whose ruined crevices owls and bats flitted forth at night, as the crescent moon sank behind the black and heavy battlements.”<sup>1</sup> Over the garden they looked on the green plain of Lombardy, bounded by the distant Apennines on the west, and melting in the horizon on the east. In this delightful retreat Shelley composed his *Julian and Maddalo*.

About this period, also, [at Lucca], *Rosalind and Helen* was [completed.]

Soon after these exquisite poems were written, Shelley returned to Venice, where his infant daughter Clara died. About this [time], while lamenting his bereavement, he composed the *Lines written among the Euganean Hills*. This is a descriptive poem, or rather reverie, composed on the occasion of an autumnal sunrise, viewed from the highest peak of “those lovely mountains which surround what was once the retreat, and where is now the sepulchre, of Petrarch.” The scenery and the cities of those delightful and historic plains that are watered by the Adige and the Brenta are touched upon with delicate and becoming grace, and are invested with a charm of fresh beauty from the glowing imagination of the Poet. There is a

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Shelley’s description, quoted in the “Shelley Memorials,” p. 93.—ED.

solemn thrill in this marvellous poem which fascinates and enchains the attention of the reader with a mysterious power, like that of the fabled music of Marsyas ; and when the magic melody of the concluding strains has died away, it is as though we had awaked from a delicious dream. . .

In the November of this year Shelley passed through Ferrara, Bologna, and Rome, on his route to Naples, where he composed his celebrated *Stanzas written in Dejection*. In the early part of the year 1819 his only surviving child, William, died, and this sad occurrence was the occasion of some beautiful but mournful verses. Considerable light is thrown on the deep anguish which Shelley endured, and also on the state of his views at this period, by one of his letters, in which he writes :—  
“ I envy death the body far less than the oppressors the minds of those whom they have torn from me. The one can only kill the body ; the other crushes the affections.”

In the spring of the same year his two most wonderful productions, *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci*, were composed. . . In October Shelley removed from Naples to Florence, where his imagination must have acquired fresh vigour among the enchantments of the Museums, the Duomo, and the Gardens of Boboli. But he remained here only for the brief space of about three months, being obliged, on account of ill-health, to retire to Pisa, to the baths

of San Giuliano. Here he wrote the *Ode to a Skylark*. Here also he composed that weird and visionary romance, *The Witch of Atlas*, the idea of which was conceived during a solitary journey which he made on foot, in the hottest weather, to the summit of Monte San Pelegrino. Here also he wrote the lyrical drama *Hellas*, and the heroic epistle *Epipsychidion*. The conclusion of this [latter] extraordinary poem may be compared with Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* and with Tennyson's *Lotos-Eaters*; but, while it soars high above the grossness and earthliness of the former, it is superior also to the latter in ease and fluency, and in the absence of anything that approaches laboured effect—the cardinal error of our Laureate's otherwise almost unexceptionable compositions. Another of Shelley's [poems written] at Pisa is the *Adonais*.

The incidents that mark the brief period of Shelley's life that remained after the composition of these poems, are familiar to all readers of poetry. Everybody knows that he removed to the Villa Magni, situated on the craggy and well-wooded shores of the Bay of Spezzia; how the Villa overlooked the blue extent of waters, with the Castle of Lerici on one side and the Porto Venere on the other; how the Poet enjoyed with intensity the magnificent scenery around him,—the bold headlands, the tideless sea, the wild precipitous cliffs, the walnut and the ilex trees, with their dark and massy foliage.

In company with his friend Williams, he set sail in a light pleasure-yacht [from Leghorn for Lerici]. The atmosphere was unusually hot, and the sea like oil. A dark fog overspread on a sudden the stagnant deep, and wrapped the little boat from the sight of those on land; and big raindrops pattered against the water, and "rebounded as they fell." A tempest arose, the thunder rolled, the lightning glared, and the waves were ploughed into foamy furrows. The fragile yacht was engulfed. After the lapse of fourteen days of miserable suspense to the unfortunate widows, the corpses of Shelley and Williams were washed ashore, four miles distant from each other. Interment being forbidden by the Italian laws of quarantine, the bodies were burned on pyres, in the presence of Byron, Hunt, and Trelawny. "The spot was wild, lonely, and inexpressibly grand. In front lay the broad, bright waters of the Mediterranean, with the islands of Elba, Capraji, and Gorgona, in view; the white marble peaks of the Apennines closed the prospect behind, cooling the intense glare of the midday sun with the semblance of snow; and all between stretched the sands (yellow against the blue of the sea), and a wild, bare, uninhabited country, parched by the saline air, and exhibiting no other vegetation than a few stunted and bent tufts of underwood. A row of high, square watch-towers stood along the coast; and above, in the hot stillness, soared a

solitary curlew, which occasionally circled close to the pile, uttering its shrill scream, and defying all attempts to drive it away. The body was placed entire in the furnace, and wine, frankincense, &c., . . . were cast on the pyre. The flames, which were of a rich golden hue, broad and towering, glistened and quivered, and threw out, together with the sunlight, so intense a heat that the atmosphere became tremulous and wavy."<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

III. I now proceed to examine the effects of Shelley's peculiar views upon his character and conduct. It will suffice to consider two incidents of his life, and to conclude with a general survey. The incidents selected are of antipodal character. They are, I believe, severally the best and the worst actions *recorded* of Shelley; and, if it be true that we may estimate the value of a man's principles by their fruits, the consideration of these actions will be no waste of time.

In the early part of 1815, in the depth of a rigorous winter, Shelley, in order to acquire some knowledge of the treatment of diseases, so as to be of use to the poor, walked a hospital, although his health was at the time extremely delicate. It is impossible not to admire this act of self-devotion on the part of a mere youth, pronounced by his physicians to be in decline, and tortured incessantly by

<sup>1</sup> "Shelley Memorials," p. 2c3.—ED.

acute pulmonary pains, from which he obtained relief only by having recourse to laudanum. Nothing but cold malice and dark bigotry would detract from the credit of the deed by insinuating that it is part of the programme of every religious reformer to acquire a reputation for charitable actions. No: be his all credit for this truly noble deed; a pure-hearted follower of Christ would have done likewise, and higher eulogy there is none.

Let us turn to the other side of the picture.

The desertion of his wife and children has been eloquently defended by one who had every reason to defend it,—the second Mrs. Shelley. But, unfortunately, the evidence of this amiable lady will be regarded as *ex parte*. “No account,” she says, “of these events has ever been given at all approaching reality in their details, either as regards himself or others; nor shall I further allude to them than to remark that the *errors of action* committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley, may, as far as he only is concerned, be fearlessly avowed by those who loved him, in the firm conviction that, *were they judged impartially*, his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any contemporary.” The fair authoress of *Frankenstein* here candidly admits that the desertion was “an error of action.” Now, what does she signify by that most pregnant hypothesis, “if he were judged impartially?” Alas, it is only an

euphemism ! The criterion implied can only be the enlightened principles of the author of *Political Justice*. Out of many concurring testimonies in proof of this, I select Mr. Peacock's account of the affair, which cannot be classed among those to which Mrs. Shelley alludes, as it was not published till long after his death. "*There was no estrangement,*" says Mr. Peacock, "*no shadow of a thought of separation,* till Shelley became acquainted with the lady who was subsequently his second wife. *The separation did not take place by mutual consent.* I cannot think that Shelley ever so represented it. *He never did so to me ;* and the account which Harriet herself gave me of the entire proceeding was decidedly contradictory of such supposition. He might well have said, after first seeing Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, *ut vidi ! ut perii ! . . .* Between his old feelings towards Harriet, from whom he was not then separated, and his new passion for Mary, he showed in his looks, in his gestures, in his speech, the state of a mind 'suffering, like a little kingdom, the nature of an insurrection.' His eyes were bloodshot ; his hair and dress disordered. He caught up a bottle of laudanum, and said : 'I never part with this !' . . . Again, he said more calmly : 'Every one who knows me must know that the partner of my life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philosophy. Harriet is a noble animal, but she can do neither.' I said, 'It

---


always appeared to me that you were very fond of Harriet.' Without affirming or denying this, he answered: 'But you did not know how I hated her sister.' The term 'noble animal' he applied to his wife, in conversation with another friend now living, intimating that the nobleness which he then ascribed to her would induce her to acquiesce in the inevitable transfer of his affections to their new shrine (!). She did not acquiesce, and he cut the Gordian knot of the difficulty by leaving England on the 28th of July, 1814. Shortly after this, I received a letter from Harriet, wishing to see me. I called on her at her father's house in Chapel-Street, Grosvenor Square. She then gave me her own account of the affair, which, as I have said, directly contradicted the supposition of anything like separation by mutual consent."

Let us now turn for a moment to Mr. Peacock's reminiscences of the lady whom Shelley dignified by the flattering definition, "a noble animal." "Few are now living," he proceeds, "who remember Harriet Shelley. I remember her well, and will describe her to the best of my recollection. Her features were regular and well-proportioned. Her hair was light brown, and was dressed with taste and simplicity. In her dress she was truly *simplex munditiis*. Her complexion was beautifully transparent; the tint of the blush-rose shining through the lily. The tone of her voice was pleasant; her



speech the essence of frankness and cordiality ; her spirits always cheerful ; her laugh spontaneous, hearty, and joyous. She was well educated. She read agreeably and intelligently. She wrote only letters, but she wrote them well. Her manners were good ; and her whole aspect and demeanour such manifest emanations of pure and truthful nature, that to be once in her company was to know her thoroughly. She was very fond of her husband, and accommodated herself in every way to his tastes. If they mixed in society, she adorned it ; if they lived in retirement, she was satisfied ; if they travelled, she enjoyed the change of scene . . . I feel it due to her memory to state my most decided conviction that her conduct as a wife was as pure, as true, as absolutely faultless, as that of any who for such conduct are held most in honour."

So writes one of Shelley's dearest and most intimate friends, looking back over an interval of more than forty years. Let us now briefly recapitulate the case. While in college, he had published and maintained that marriage is a contract binding only during mutual pleasure. He marries a woman whose face and form are beautiful, whose manners are graceful, whose education is good, and whose conduct as a wife is declared by one who knew her well to have been "absolutely faultless." He is united to her by the Scotch ceremony and by the ritual of the Anglican Church. She bears him two



children, and loves him tenderly and well. Suddenly he beholds the daughter of Godwin. The mist falls from his eyes. He discovers that "the partner of his life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philosophy." He thereupon forsakes the wife to whom he had once addressed the burning vows of his passion, whom he had sworn to protect for better, for worse, to the end of her days. In his cold-blooded selfishness he even violates his own refined doctrine. He erases "mutual pleasure," and substitutes "his own," as an exceptional amendment. His deserted wife drowns herself in the Serpentine in a fit of hopeless despondency; an extremity which would never have happened had her husband remained faithful to her. And, a fortnight afterwards,<sup>1</sup> with the blood of his children's mother a fresh blot upon his soul, the avowed infidel goes through the mummary of the solemnization of Holy Matrimony with another woman! . . .

If we look upon his life, as recorded by his widow and his friends, we shall find it to consist of the most perplexing anomalies, the most startling incon-

<sup>1</sup> In strict verity it was a little more. "On Saturday, Nov. 9th, Harriet Shelley drowned herself in the Serpentine. The body was not found till Dec. 10th, and on the 16th Godwin received a letter on the subject from Shelley . . . Shelley's second marriage took place on Monday, December 30." These are Mr. C. Kegan Paul's gleanings from the *Diary of Godwin*. See "William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries," Vol. II., pp. 244-5.—Ed.

sistencies. It is, in fact, a series of climaxes, each coming down to a ludicrous anticlimax. The blaspheming infidel, the selfish bigamist, the ruthless iconoclast of kingdoms and priesthoods, wears a schoolboy's jacket, and shrinks from animal food as from pollution. The terrible mind that cast the tragedy of *The Cenci* relaxes itself by tearing up a fifty-pound banknote to make a paper boat. The philanthropist who framed the daring scheme of regenerating Ireland, as a fulcrum for the future reformation of the world, retires in dismay before the shrieks of a mob, and the hints of a municipal Dogberry. The Titan, who would wield his mimic bolt against the Creator of the infinite universe, falls down in a swoon when his overwrought fancy conjures up amid the moonlit waves the harmless spectre of a naked child. It is a weak, fragile, womanish character indeed; yet containing a large substratum of manliness. Of him truly it may be said, in the words of Joubert, that he was "a great-souled, heavenly-minded child." But his great soul is dwarfed in its "godlike isolation." His heavenly mind is "sicklied o'er with the pale cast" of morbid and corrosive thought. His childishness is pitiable to a degree when it frets against human destiny, and fumes with all the impotence of infantile anger against the omnipotence of the all-creative Father.

\* \* \* \* \*

IV. Shelley's poems contain some of the most

magnificent ideas and the most splendid expressions in literature. I admire the melody of his verse, the vividness and accuracy of his descriptions, and the enormous grasp of his imagination. He has produced, with a single exception, the finest tragic drama of the century. But I believe that [most of] his poems, though exquisitely beautiful, are not great. What are the requisites of a great poem? Look at the *Iliad*, the *Æneid*, *Paradise Lost*, or the *Inferno*. In every page of the glorious Greek epic we have real feeling with which to sympathize, real colouring and costume to admire. It is a truism to say that he who traced the wanderings of Ulysses, the woes of Helen and Andromache, and the manly grief of Pelides, shows that he felt every pulsation of the human heart within his own. The same may be said, with some modifications, of the severer muse of Virgil. The toils and struggles of Æneas and his devoted band, like the wanderings of Ulysses, are a colossal monument of ancient heroism, confronting peril after peril, obstacle after obstacle, and conquering all at the last. Milton elevates us and spiritualizes us. Dante touches us with a profound and melancholy awe. Now take the poems of Shelley.

*Alastor* deals with one solitary phase of humanity, and does not even sound its lowest depths. It represents a soul withered up and scorched to annihilation by the fire of its own genius—a calamity,

be it remembered, which rarely, if ever, occurs. And how does it present this most touching of all tragedies? By a series of gaudy and glittering pictures. We follow Alastor to the broken Acropolis of Athens, to the obelisks and sphinxes of Ethiopia, to the wastes of Arabie, to the plains of Persia, to the Chorasmian shore; and so on, through a series of impossibilities of which Ariosto or Boiardo might have been proud, to the weird and darkly-splendid scene of his death. *Alastor* is, in effect, the *Pilgrimage of Childe Harold* compressed, the part of Childe Harold being clipped and modified to suit the purposes of the Poet. It is a singular fact that the first two cantos of *Childe Harold* had taken the world by storm just three years before the publication of *Alastor*, and were in everybody's mouth as the great poem of the day. In *Alastor* we have the same sad story told with a few variations. A cynical young poet, with whom all the women fall desperately in love at first sight, travels about the world at random, and at last settles down upon the East. Both Alastor and Childe Harold are sick of the same disease; but the symptoms of the one are barely noticed, while those of the other are set forth with elaborate detail. Again, as Childe Harold is the diseased, yet manly, representative of Byron; so is Alastor the diseased and effeminate type of the character of Shelley. The immortal Childe suffers deeply, but he philosophizes on his sufferings.

Alastor is so weak that he hardly more than suffers.

\* \* \* \* \*

It has been frequently asserted that the [lines on *Mont Blanc* are] greatly inferior to Coleridge's *Hymn*. The observation itself is sufficiently plausible, but the principle of criticism on which it is founded is false. In point of fact, it would not be more unreasonable to compare the *Doctor Faustus* of Kit Marlowe with Goethe's *Faust*, or the *Saint Greal* of Tysilio with the *Idylls* of Tennyson, than it is to institute a comparison between the poems in question. The two poets, Coleridge and Shelley, were men of widely different principles, not only with respect to theology and politics, but also with respect to the art and province of poetry; and each contemplated from widely different points of view the subject which both have happened to handle poetically. Coleridge, when he wrote his celebrated *Hymn*, had long since escaped from what he so happily terms "the howling wilderness of infidelity." Shelley, on the other hand, was wildly struggling with the blinding tempest, and endeavouring to find a sure footing on the treacherous quicksands. It would be as absurd to expect that the two poets, in such opposite circumstances, should have contemplated the same object with precisely similar [emotions,] as to imagine that the feelings of Christian when he laboured in the Slough of Despond should

have been precisely similar to those which he experienced when he entered the Eternal City. . . If a comparison must be made, let the poems be considered in close connection with the views and opinions of their respective authors, and let the criterion of excellence be instituted accordingly. Has Coleridge expressed his peculiar views in finer language and in a nobler style than the style and language in which Shelley has expressed his? Has Shelley surpassed Coleridge in the intensity of his imagery and in the vividness of his painting? . . .

To a liberal and candid critic the lines of Shelley will appear very slightly inferior to those of Coleridge; and the slight superiority of the latter over the former, will be attributed to the fact that the religion of the elder poet was incomparably superior to the philosophy of the younger.

\* \* \* \* \*

*The Revolt of Islam* contains unmistakable evidences of a mind ill at ease, of an imagination morbidly and preternaturally energetic, of a soul torn and tortured by a keen sense of injury, and tost by a tempestuous struggle between the hostile elements of wild despair and hope still wilder. . . The narrative, indistinct and uninteresting in most places where it is not unreal, and fantastic, abounds, notwithstanding, in passages of exceeding beauty, both as regards their conception and the manner of their expression. But throughout the whole poem

there is an almost total absence of the two prime requisites of genuine poetry. The writings of the great masters, even when the subjects treated are supernatural, are invariably characterized by distinctness of thought, and by human sympathy and interest. Homer's divinities, Tasso's wizards and enchantresses, Shakespeare's fairies and monsters, Milton's seraphs and fallen angels, all possess human attributes in a sufficient degree to rouse and to evoke a more or less powerful interest in the mind of every reader. But who can experience the faintest sensation of interest in the destinies of two such incomprehensible beings as Laon and Cythna, moving as they do through a series of miraculous and incoherent adventures, more dazzling, more startling, and more perplexing than the delusions of a nightmare? We can readily, and without any undue straining of the imaginative faculties, realize to ourselves the councils and banquets of the gods on Olympus; the charms and counter-charms of Ismeno, and the witching enchantments of Armida; the quarrel and reconciliation of Oberon and Titania; the capricious frolics of Ariel; the half-brutish, half-human nature of Caliban; and the sublimely-told war of Michael and the Angels of Light against Satan and the Angels of Darkness. And not only do we invest these shadowy beings and their supernatural deeds with the glow and colour of reality, but we even experience a deep and



unmingled pleasure, not without its accompanying profit, in the contemplation of their characters. Now, it will be found that these pleasurable emotions are to be attributed in great measure to the fact, that whenever such machinery is introduced by the great masters into their poetry, it is always treated as of secondary importance, and is always intended to relieve the incidents of the plot, or to assist in the development of the action. In the absence of either of these objects, the supernatural in works of the imagination will invariably prove insipid, wearisome, and devoid of interest. The employment of the supernatural in *The Revolt of Islam* is not necessary for the furtherance of either of these objects. It follows, therefore, that the poem presents little of what is attractive to the ordinary reader, and even to the philosopher is far less productive of real gain than many poems of lower pretensions and of inferior excellence. To what reader, whether he be a proficient or a tyro, can it be either amusing or instructive to thread the intricacies of Laon's dreams ; to ascend with him to the summit of the cloud-piercing column ; to fight beside him in his Titanic battle ; to witness his romantic reunion with Laone ; to follow the lovers as they are borne on the black Tartar horse to the uttermost ends of the earth ; to listen to Laone's story, more incredible than any of the most marvellous of the tales of Scheherazade ; to accompany them through perils,

famine, and capture, till, on a pyre loftier than the City's loftiest towers, they are both consumed together, and finally enter a Paradise too beautiful to be adequately described even in the highest flights of poetry? After intense study, perchance, and after many a patient reperusal, these images may become at length familiar and not altogether unattractive. But such a taste as this must be unnatural; and a taste that is acquired can never afford the same charms or yield the same benefits as one that is inherent in our nature.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Adonais* may be compared with the finest elegies of our language, *Lycidas* and *In Memoriam*. The great elegy of Milton is certainly disfigured by an overcrowding of allegory taken from the classical mythology; and, although the diction is chaste and elevated, the verse sonorous and stately, and most of the ideas and similes sublime and lofty, yet the pathos is almost crushed out by an overwhelming weight of learning and ornament. In reading *Lycidas*, we see much more of the poet's genius and power than of his sorrow for the fate of his friend. Now, this is not exactly the object of elegiac poetry. A great scholar oppressed by intense sorrow should no more think of expressing his feelings in classical allegory, if he would touch the chords of sympathy in his various readers, than he would think of expressing them by an algebraical equation. The

poem, in this respect, resembles a funeral oration spoken by a hired rhetorician, who pays more attention to the pomp of his tropes and the glitter of his periods than to the great object of awakening sympathy in the breasts of his audience. *In Memoriam* leaves behind it at a great distance both *Lycidas* and *Adonais*, in the darkness of the poet's sorrow, in the grandeur of the ideas, and in the deep religious feeling which is the undercurrent of the whole lament. The faults of the piece are, I conceive, its occasional obscurity and its mannerisms and affectations of original expression—faults from which *Adonais* is perfectly free. But, take it as a whole, and *In Memoriam* is like the mournful roll of an anthem for the dead, "containing passages of thrilling pathos, which stir the deepest heart with anguish; sudden and transient bursts of joyous harmony, which fire the soul with fervid but momentary hope; confused and bewildering tumults of intermingled notes in which the music of the leading theme is almost lost; and, at the last, a flood of jubilant and triumphant melody, which seems to indicate that our grief has been wrestled with and trampled under foot by the unconquerable prowess of Hope and Faith."<sup>1</sup> There is something truly grand in this. It is the true sublimity of manliness.

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> This passage is reproduced in the Essay on "Coleridge" (pp. 85-86).—ED.

In contemplating the splendour of the *Prometheus Unbound*, the mind is literally intoxicated, blinded, prostrated, overwhelmed. Nothing in our language presents such a combination of brilliant metaphor and superb illustration. The power of imagination displayed is unequalled by any other English poet. We find nothing to resemble it save in the creations of Dante and Goethe. The battle of Messiah with the Angels of Darkness is sublimely and wonderfully told; but there is not the same magical scope of imagination as in several passages of the *Prometheus*. I take but a single example. It is one of the most astounding idealizations in literature :—

“ And from the other opening in the wood  
Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,  
A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,  
Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass  
Flow, as through empty space, music and light :  
Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,  
Purple and azure, white, green and golden,  
Sphere within sphere ; and every space between  
Peopled with unimaginable shapes,  
Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep,  
Yet each inter-transpicuous, and they whirl  
Over each other with a thousand motions,  
Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning,  
And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,  
Intensely, slowly, solemnly, roll on,  
Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,  
Intelligible words and music wild.  
With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb  
Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist  
Of elemental subtlety, like light ;  
And the wild odour of the forest flowers,

The music of the living grass and air,  
The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams,  
Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed,  
Seem kneaded into one ærial mass  
Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,  
Pillowed upon its alabaster arms,  
Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil,  
On its own folded wings, and wavy hair,  
The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep,  
And you can see its little lips are moving,  
Amid the changing light of their own smiles,  
Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.

And from a star upon its forehead, shoot,  
Like swords of azure fire, or golden spears  
With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtined,  
Embleming heaven and earth united now,  
Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel  
Which whirls as the orb whirls, swifter than thought,  
Filling the abyss with sun-like lightnings,  
And perpendicular now, and now transverse,  
Pierce the dark soil, and as they pierce and pass,  
Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart."

The passionate self-abandonment of the Poet's imagination, with its sweeping, irresistible impetuosity, carries the mind along with it, like a leaf upon the whirlwind. It is the most wonderful passage of a drama every line of which is wonderful. Impetuosity of thought is force, calmness of thought is power. The one is like the brawling mountain cataract that whirls the frail canoe to destruction. The other is like the majestic river, rolling amid fruitful lands, upon whose tide the merchant-ship

may entrust its costly freight, and the smaller craft may ride secure, undismayed by the mimic storms which sometimes vex its tranquil waters. Shelley declares that he has taken Æschylus as his model; but there is as great a difference between this resplendent gem of imagery and the ancient tragedy of Athens as there is between the graceful and voluptuous figures of Canova and the severe and stately marbles of the Acropolis. The work bears upon its front the stamp and impress of the nineteenth century; and, moreover, the persons of the drama, which in Æschylus would have been thrown out with a vividness approaching reality, float about on the Shelleyan stage in that peculiar atmosphere of chiaro-oscuro which is one of the principal characteristics of the author. Mrs. Brown has produced a more classical drama, because it is more simple and self-restrained. Yet for splendour and magnificence the *Prometheus Unbound* is without a rival. But what is the interpretation of this dazzling metaphysical dream? The answer is inevitable,—Human perfectibility, universal equality, and the requiem of religion—that glorious sun which rose on France, and went down, while it was yet day, in a deluge of fratricidal blood.

\* \* \* \* \*

If the *Prometheus* is unsurpassed for grandeur, *The Cenci* is for horror unapproached. This play is the very antithesis of the *Prometheus*. For, while

in form and execution it is modelled after the romantic drama of England and Spain, in spirit and conception it is essentially Greek. The plot, taken from one of the most revolting atrocities that disgraced the pontificate of Clement the Eighth, is treated indeed with modern delicacy; but the mythological fortunes of the Pelopidæ and Labdacidæ present few horrors more appalling. The elements that predominate throughout the whole drama are the dark fatalism of Æschylus, the terrible earnestness of Sophocles, and the profound and thrilling pathos of Euripides. In the plays of our greatest modern dramatist, the character of Richard III. exhibits perhaps the most savage cruelty and the most diabolical malice; while that of King Lear displays most amply those misfortunes which possess the greatest claim to our compassion. But in the character of Count Cenci there is a hellish depravity much more revolting than in that of the hunchback King; and in the horrible calamities of Beatrice there is revealed a far deeper abyss of misery than in the helplessness and humiliation of Lear. We almost admire the demoniac Richard, when we witness the craft and dissimulation of which he shows such profound mastery in his address to the Lady Anne; the cunning and intrigue by means of which he elevates himself to the pinnacle of power, and rids himself of all who stand in the way of his boundless

ambition ; the splendid and spirit-stirring harangue with which he cheers his soldiery to the fight ; and, lastly, his desperate and lion-like courage on the field where he loses his crown and his life. It is the sort of admiration we experience towards Milton's Satan or Goethe's Mephistopheles. But in the fiendish malice of Count Cenci, there is everything to execrate, nothing to applaud. In sympathizing with the misfortunes of Lear, on the other hand, our compassion is in some measure counterbalanced by contempt, when we reflect on the childish folly and injustice which have brought him down to beggary and ruin. But our pity towards Beatrice is arrested on her very first appearance ; as the plot unfolds itself, it becomes deeper and deeper ; and there is nothing to palliate or counteract it. If unmitigated horror be the highest qualification of tragedy, we have it assuredly in *The Cenci*. Not the faintest glimmer of comedy strays through the tragical gloom. This is untrue to Nature, but it is true to Art. Look at life. A man has lost his father, his mistress is alienated, his finances are in ruins. In a paroxysm of anguish he walks down the nearest street. What objects meet his eye, nay, even arrest his attention and provoke a bitter sardonic laugh ? Behold a battered old scamp of three-score-and-ten ogling a young ladies' boarding-school through an eye-glass. Look at this elaborately "got-up" apprentice of "sweet



seventeen." A glance will reveal the meaning of that strut, that necktie, that canary-coloured glove. The young gentleman has begun by imagining himself an amalgamation of Apollo, Antinous, and Adonis. He has gone on to imagine himself in love. He ends by imagining himself a Byron. Do not doubt that he is at this moment reciting to himself what he can remember of *The Dream* or *Locksley Hall*. You have here the modern Falstaff and the modern Malvolio. Now Shakespeare, whose ideal of the drama was the holding up of a mirror before nature, saw all this; and thus even his most thrilling tragedies are relieved by touches of comedy. But the principle of such writers as Shelley is to idealize nature, not merely to represent her as she is. They appear *tacitly* to consider it degrading to tragedy to mix it up with such phases of humanity as the fool, the clown, and the drunken Porter, which are, nevertheless, faithful transcripts of humanity.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

V. Its intense subjectivity, its ethereal brilliancy, its professed universality, are the beauty and the attraction of [Shelley's] philosophy. It is a mistake to call it Atheism. It is a system of Pantheism, rendered lovely and alluring with the hues and

<sup>1</sup> Not that the Author had forgotten the praise bestowed by Shelley on "King Lear." See "Life and Letters of E. J. Armstrong," p. 422.—ED.


outlines of an angel. But woe to him who is seduced by its siren laughter and its bewitching sighs ! Woe to him who falls a victim to its glance of summer-lightning and the subtle magic of its wreathen smiles ! . . It is a philosophy which might well dupe an ardent imagination. It vanishes like a beautiful bubble before the breath of reason. But to a man of not much reason or imagination, but of a loving and trustful nature, it will appear at once heartless and fallacious, "a thing wherein he feels there is some hidden want." It was a philosophy which did not even confer happiness upon its author. There are passages of despair in his poetry which wither up the soul like the hot blasts of a furnace. No man has afforded a better practical comment on the old cry against infidelity—"Build up, if you can, an edifice more beautiful, more stately, a faith more suited to the cravings of the human heart, than that which you have attempted to destroy !" <sup>1</sup> What, indeed, would he

<sup>1</sup> The weak point in Shelley's character was early detected by Godwin, who exposed it to Shelley himself in a letter (dated March 4, 1812), printed in the "Shelley Memorials," and in Mr. C. Kegan Paul's pleasantly-written *Memoirs of Godwin* :—"One principle that I believe is wanting in you, and in all our too fervent and impetuous reformers, is the thought that almost every institution and form of society is good in its place and in the period of time to which it belongs. How many beautiful and admirable effects grew out of Popery and the monastic institutions in the period when they were in their genuine health and vigour. To them we owe almost all our

give us in exchange for the faith of our fathers? He bids us worship and pay our vows in the Temple of Nature without its God. That wondrous Temple, whose vast illimitable dome is fretted with innumerable globes of fire, whose columns are the eagle-baffling crags—no spirit breathes in it, no Shekinah illumines its Holy of Holies. It is as a loved and lovely being, from whose deep eye the sparkle has vanished, from whose lips the light of life has fled away. In its cold obstruction it is ineffably beautiful; but there is no throb there to tell of life, no murmured word to breathe of hope. What is all its beauty without life? What are all its sweet fainting colours without warmth?—Dust and ashes in a sarcophagus of jewels, corruption and loathsomeness in the regalia of a queen.

He saw the divinity of sorrow, and the sublime majesty of triumphant suffering, in the chains, the vulture, the adamant of Prometheus; but a film fell upon his eyes, and a coldness entered into his heart, when he turned to gaze on the Cross of Calvary, and the God who paled with anguish *there*. The

logic and our literature. What excellent effects do we reap, even at this day, from the feudal system and from chivalry! In this point of view nothing perhaps can be more worthy of our applause than the English Constitution. . . . There is a period, indeed, when each institution is obsolete, and should be laid aside; but it is of much importance that we should not proceed too rapidly in this, or introduce any change before its due and proper season.”—ED.



selfish woes of his Alastor were a dream of ravishing music to him ; but he shut his ears to that voice of sublime self-sacrificing agony that rent the Temple's veil and shook the darkened world. In the inarticulate murmurings of the weary West Wind he found a feeble response to the tears and sighs of humanity ; but the awful human expressions of divine agony that broke the night-silence of Gethsemane grated harshly upon his being.

But it is not for us to judge him. . . We have before us no Bolingbroke, no Lyttelton, no Voltaire, no Chesterfield. We have a man whose exquisite purity of morals is only sullied by one dark blot . . . ; a man who loved his fellow-beings with an intense and sacred passion ; who, despite a physical organization tremblingly feminine, fought manfully and well in a noble cause of which he was the mistaken adherent ; who, although the means he adopted were reprehensible, and the end at which he aimed different from the true one, struggled with all the energies of his being to effect a glorious purpose—the regeneration of his race ; who devoted his life, his time, his labour, his imagination of molten gold, not to the selfish object of personal fame, but to the achievements of a pure, though mistaken, philanthropy. Such a man was Percy Bysshe Shelley—of such amiability, of such true nobleness of soul, that we can only attribute the evils of his character to his want of that faith which is to man as the compass to the mariner on a storm-blown ocean.

## KEATS.

HITHERTO] I have been always accustomed to admire the poetry of Keats as one who is not an artist or a natural philosopher admires a beautiful landscape ; the lights and shadows afford a pure delight, without its cause being analyzed ; the roar of the waterfall subdues and softens, without a scientific investigation of the laws of acoustics ; the sighing of the breeze in the leaves of the wood is a sufficient enjoyment in itself, without any very profound considerations respecting the vibrations of the atmosphere. To me the poetry of Keats has ever been like a garden of flowers "lovelier than their names," and I have been hitherto passively content to admire the flowers without stooping to decipher the floricultural Latin inscribed on the stakes at their sides.

The poetry of Keats is remarkable in an eminent degree for its sensuousness ; and I think, on the whole, it more sensuous than ideal. No man was ever more *physically* a poet than Keats. He exhibits in his tremulous sensibility the finest illustration of the old dogma, *poeta nascitur*. He was in truth born a poet. His nerves thrilled, his pulses

leaped, to every influence of nature. "The sounding cataract haunted him like a passion ;" but he did not live, as Wordsworth did, to look on nature as a mother rather than as a mistress ; and so, his poetry is for the most part the poetry of a boy ; it wants the calmness and the vigour of the man's.

I have not the smallest doubt that his *habit* of being sensuously affected by every impulse of nature wore him out, more than his passion, or his ambition, or his hard work. If a man trembles every time he hears music, and glories in the emotion ; if a man thrills in every vein whenever he looks at the sea or the sky ; and if he lies awake long nights picturing up splendid scenery, and striving to hear in vision the voice of waters and the songs of birds ; there is little doubt that his constitution will soon play him false. Add to this fact that a man in order to be so intensely affected by such emotions must be born with a constitution nervous and refined, and we can easily understand how Adonais faded—

"Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,  
And fed with true love tears instead of dew."

In literary history there are two analogues to the case of John Keats. They are not exactly parallels, but they are very close resemblances in some particulars. I allude to Chatterton and David Gray.

Reading Professor Masson's story of Chatterton, we see what an enthusiast was that "marvellous boy;" reading that most beautiful and touching essay, we can realize painfully and too well the meaning of Coleridge's impassioned lines—

"And while the numbers flowing strong  
In eddies whirl, in surges throng,  
Exulting in the spirits' genial throe  
In tides of power his life-blood seems to flow."

The story of David Gray may be found in the February [1864] number of the *Cornhill Magazine*; and I am sure few readers have failed to be struck by the analogy between that melancholy history and the history of Keats. At the same time, while their histories resemble one another, the genius of Keats was immeasurably the greatest of the three.

I have instituted the comparison solely for the purpose of offering a few remarks upon poetical enthusiasm. No man ever yet was a poet without being at the same time an enthusiast. I will even go so far as to say that no man ever yet accomplished a truly great achievement without a certain degree of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is one of the principal elements of genius, but more especially is it the first requisite of poetical genius; and the man of stagnant blood and immoveable nerves need never hope, by dint of the most studious cultivation and the most elaborate imitation, to succeed in accomplishing a true poem. But the error of

Keats and the others consisted mainly in yielding *all* to the divine impulse, and reserving nothing for the more earthly *reason*. It is not the excess of this enthusiasm that we are to censure, but the absence or deficiency of the other requisite, *judgment*. No doubt, had Keats lived, his enthusiasm and his judgment [might] have assumed equal proportions. But it may be said that the man John Keats could not possibly have survived to maturity, just because he was constitutionally altogether a child of impulse. This I deny; I believe, that, had his reason been *cultivated* more than his imagination, he would have been calmer and more vigorous, a greater poet, and a truer man. For excessive subjectivity is nothing but effeminacy, and there is no such thing as true manliness without a strongly-developed reason. Without this element, too, what is the richest and most exquisite poetry? It is nature without her pervading soul. I believe that the excessive subjectivity of Keats not only [tended to wear] out his frame, but took away much from the dignity and grandeur of his poetry.



## TENNYSON.

\* \* \* \* \*

LOOK [into] the *Morte d'Arthur*, or *Ulysses*, or *Locksley Hall*, and you have the passions and deep thoughts of men. And *In Memoriam*—is it too much to say that every elegy of that sublime poem is an uninspired psalm? What nobler legacy of thought could any poet bequeath to the future of the world than the spotless character of the young, the gifted, the pure-minded Arthur Hallam? The music of that beloved name seems to have haunted the Poet's life, and his conception of Arthur "the blameless king" is but the splendid ideal left by memory of Arthur his friend:—

"All-comprehensive tenderness,  
 All-subtilising intellect . . .  
 The critic clearness of an eye,  
 That saw thro' all the Muses' walk ;  
 Seraphic intellect and force  
 To seize and throw the doubts of man ;  
 Impassion'd logic, which outran  
 The hearer in its fiery course ;  
 High nature amorous of the good,  
 But touch'd with no ascetic gloom ;  
 And passion pure in snowy bloom  
 Thro' all the years of April blood . . .

And manhood fused with female grace  
In such a sort, the child would twine  
A trustful hand, unask'd, in thine,  
And find his comfort in thy face . . ."

Who can read these words, and fail to worship the ideal, or fail to love the man?

Such poetry as this must last for ever, because it is the embodiment of the loftiest aspirations of man; because it struggles upward through the tumult and turmoil of this mortal life, and finds a purer air to breathe in, a brighter region to inhabit. It must last, because it searches into the deepest depths of our being; because its highest art is to reproduce nature itself. And, while our era will be spoken of hereafter in history as the age of commerce, and science, and magnificent enterprise, not the least debt of England's future will be owed to Alfred Tennyson, the Poet of Victoria's golden days.

## THE CHARACTER OF MEPHISTOPHELES.

THIS paper by no means claims to itself the dignity of an essay. It is only a few short notes, hurriedly and disjointedly put together, suggested by a well-known critique by Professor Masson, entitled *The Three Devils: Luther's, Milton's, and Goethe's*; an essay which seems to have been itself suggested in some wise by a paper entitled *The Three Fausts*, in an old number of the *Monthly Magazine*, by Mr. Lewes.

Milton's Satan (according to Professor Masson) was an Archangel, grander and more sublime in his intelligence and in his power, than any of his brother Angels and Archangels. If not in every respect the highest Archangel in Heaven, he was one of the four highest. After the Deity, he could feel conscious that he was the greatest being in the universe. Yet the Deity was so high above him in Heaven that even the highest Archangel might proceed on a wrong notion of his character. "Repose and physical weakness," says

Mr. Masson, "are favourable to the recognition of a derived existence: hence the beauty of the feebleness of old age preceding the approach of death. . . The young man, rejoicing in his strength, cannot believe that his breath is in his nostrils. In some such way the Archangel fell. Rejoicing in his strength, walking colossal through Heaven, gigantic in his conceptions, incessant in his working, ever scheming, ever imagining new enterprises, Satan was in his very nature the most active of God's Archangels. . . . His notion of the Deity was higher and grander than that of any other Angel: but, then, he was not a contemplative spirit; and his feeling of derived existence grew weak in the glow and excitement of constant occupation. . . . Although the greatest Angel in Heaven—nay, just because he was such—he was the readiest to fall."

After his rebellion and his defeat, Satan, awaking from a long stupor, amidst the fiery waves of Hell, "first strikes out the idea of existing for ever after as the Devil." The secret of his resolution was the necessity for action which had grown upon him, and become a part of his being. Satan cannot, from his very nature, endure passively. He must act. But the secret of ambition is intense mental activity, and so he aspires to obtain the sovereignty of Hell. "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven." And so he plots and schemes for the destruction of the new race of beings who were to be created to

inhabit the new world : for this he at once perceived to be the weak point of the universe. Yet, fallen as he is, "his thoughts are sad and noble." He is able still to sympathize ; but, with a scornful effort, he shakes off the sympathy with the innocence of man, and the beauty of the world, which is creeping upon him. And, "in the very course of the train of thinking" superinduced by this violence done to his better nature, he "begins to degenerate into a meaner being." He tempts Eve, hissing into her ear, and sitting "squat like a toad" beside her. He accomplishes her fall in the guise of a serpent. "When the evil is done, he slinks away through the brushwood." All the Archangel has fallen away from him, and has been trodden down beneath his feet in terrible contempt, the offspring of more terrible despair. "In the very act of ruining Man he committed himself to a life of ignominious activity : he was to go on his belly and eat dust all his days."

Let me offer a brief explanation of what seems to me to be Professor Masson's theory of Milton's conception of the fall of Satan. Suppose the *principal* attributes of an infinite spirit to be Love, Hatred, Knowledge, Power ; and suppose intellectual activity to be co-existent with all of these. Now, if the greatest Archangel, Satan, yearned after infinite perfection, there was nothing impious in his desire to obtain it in every attribute but power. He was originally a pure spirit. He may at first, perhaps,

have desired infinite love. But in order to *love* infinitely, so great a spirit as he must *know* infinitely. In his desire to attain infinite knowledge, a preternatural and inordinate degree of activity would be inevitably produced in him. Now, in the exercise of this vast intellectual activity it is easy to suppose that its object would be lost sight of. Nothing is more common than that, in "running for Olympian crowns, we should lose sight of the sun in the dust of the racing chariots." But the very exercise of activity for the sake of knowledge merely, would bring with it a feeling of immensely increased power. The feeling of having acquired *some* power would produce a desire for *more*.<sup>1</sup> Suppose the activity of the Archangel to have grown into a monster necessity; its first or its second object once lost sight of, a new object would immediately arise. Power was the most natural object. But so great and so energetic a spirit as Satan would not

<sup>1</sup> "Without power, virtue would be insufficient, and incapable of revealing its being. It would resemble the magic transformation of Tasso's heroine into a tree, in which she could only groan and bleed. (Hence power is necessarily an object of our desire and of our admiration.) But of all power, that of the mind is, on every account, the grand desideratum of human ambition. We shall be as gods in knowledge, was and must have been the *first* temptation: and the co-existence of great intellectual lordship with guilt has never been adequately represented without exciting the strongest interest."  
—COLERIDGE. (*Critique on Bertram, Biog. Lit.*)—E. J. A.

be content with power—he must be *all*-powerful. And as there can be but one omnipotent Being in the universe, Satan's very desire for omnipotence was equivalent to his fall; for it was the open violation of a necessary and immutable law.

We now turn to Goethe's Mephistopheles; and it will be my object to endeavour to develop Mr. Masson's conception of this character somewhat more distinctly, and to throw what light I can upon it by extracts and allusions afforded by the drama itself.—After this introduction, I suppose it is needless to [insist] that the present paper is merely intended as an exercise in poetical criticism; an attempt, by verifying the conclusions of a [proficient] in the art, to realize more fully, and to present in bolder outlines, a character which may be considered one of the most wonderful and most valuable conceptions in the modern poetry of Europe.—

“Mephistopheles,” says Professor Masson, “is the Spirit of Evil in modern society;” and the condition of society as depicted by Goethe, before the appearance of Mephistopheles in the drama, seems to bear out this remark. The Satan of Milton takes six thousand years to degenerate into the Mephistopheles of Goethe: but the same lapse of time has been necessarily accompanied by a corresponding degeneracy in men. Thus, in the scene before the gate we have a motley group of promenaders, all bent on those popular forms of pleasure in which immorality is the predominating element. The

mechanics are avowedly on the look-out for the prettiest maidens, and the stoutest beer, and brawls of a prime sort. The servant-girls are looking for their lovers. The students openly declare their partiality for strong beer, smartly-dressed damsels, and stinging tobacco. The citizens' daughters are practising their fairest smiles, to catch the eyes of the students. The citizens are slandering the Burgomaster, or gossiping about the worst features of the war, or launching bolts of ponderous scorn against the innovations of the times. The old woman is flattering the young girls with an easy smile, and chuckling with them in a broad hint that she can help them to what they wish. One citizen's daughter reminds her companion of the apparition of her future lover shown her last St. Andrew's Eve by a witch. Her companion talks in a strain of tawdry sentimentalism of her own lover, a soldier whom she seeks in the crowd, but can nowhere behold. The soldiers are bawling out a roystering tavern-catch about the martial breath of the trumpet, and the capture of fortresses and maidens. It is a vivid picture of modern society, seething with corruption, keenly alive to worldly and sensual enjoyments. In the midst of this scene of tumult and excitement Faust enters in a contemplative and highly transcendental mood, and beside him the material-minded Wagner—the personification of grubbing stupidity and hard-working imbecility. Faust, of course, takes a romantic view of the scene



before him, and the contrast between his poetical raptures and the grovelling matter-of-fact observations of Wagner would itself furnish subject-matter for a chapter on the psychology of Goethe. The coldness and insensibility of Wagner (like steel struck against flint) awaken in Faust the ruling passion of his soul, that splendid ambition which has been displayed in such a magnificent burst of poetry in the opening of the drama. The aspiration of Faust is for universality of mind, an aspiration in which man is at the same time most strong and most weak. For all men, if we are to believe the poets, at certain moments feel the divinity stirring within them, and that part of us which is immortal pants for the infinite, and yearns with a terrible yearning to shake off the burthen of the material and lose itself in the immaterial and the universal. The feeling is thus expressed by Faust:—

“Two souls, alas ! are lodged within my breast,  
Which struggle there for undivided reign.  
One to the world, with obstinate desire,  
And closely-cleaving organs, still adheres  
Above the mist ; the other doth aspire,  
With sacred vehemence, to purer spheres. . . .  
A magic mantle did I but possess,  
Abroad to waft me as on viewless wings,  
I'd prize it far beyond the costliest dress,  
Nor would I change it for the robe of kings.”<sup>1</sup>


<sup>1</sup> The translation here, and generally throughout, adopted, is Miss Anna Swanwick's.—ED.

Here, although Faust is in his highest mood, yet, from the very dizziness of the height which he has reached, he is now most liable to fall. Accordingly, Mephistopheles attracts his notice, and recalls him to the earth, by assuming the appearance of a strange-looking black hound, which wheels round him in gradually narrowing circles, and at last crouches beneath his feet. The black hound enters with him into his study, and here a curious scene ensues, which illustrates in a high degree the course of action pursued by Mephistopheles throughout,—the policy, in a word, of the Evil Spirit of modern society.

Night is falling. Feelings of calm, and of reliance upon the Deity, enter the tortured soul of the aspiring scholar—

“Lull’d is each stormy deed to rest,  
And tranquilliz’d each wild desire ;  
Pure charity doth warm the breast,  
And love to God the soul inspire.”

But here the black hound by its restlessness recalls him to the barren bookshelves and the flickering lamp of the study. This is the key to the policy of Mephistopheles. Faust longs for the infinite with an inordinate aspiration ; the Spirit of Denial perpetually drags him down to the finite, and he is so weak that he invariably either yields or becomes desperate. Yet again he aspires, and the



aspiration of Faust is at once the essence and the proof of his immortality.

“Reason begins again to speak,  
Again the bloom of hope returns,  
The streams of life we fain would seek,  
Yea, for life’s source our spirit yearns.”

Here the black hound suddenly growls, and Faust in his reverie begins to think of such characters as Wagner,—men who seem, by an invariable law, to be attached to the aspiring and the poetic :—

“Among mankind, indeed, they oft are found,  
Who, what they do not understand, despise,  
And what is good and beautiful, contemn,  
Because beyond their sympathies it lies.  
And will the poodle snarl at it like them ?”

But then, deeply as he yearns for rest, he longs still more for universality, for infinity ; and he naturally turns to Revelation, which lets in glimpses of the infinite upon him—as, when a cathedral-door is for a moment flung wide, a gush of music touches the soul, and is lost. He seeks for a revelation of the Infinite in the Book of Books, and reads, in the loved accents of the German tongue, that verse, sublime in its simplicity, awful in the depth of its mystery—“In the beginning was the Word.” But this does not satisfy the realistic tendency of his aspirings. So he corrects it, and reads, “In the beginning was the Power.” Another

step and Faust the godlike proves that he is but a man after all. He changes it once more, and reads it thus :—"In the beginning was the Deed." And from that moment the power of the Fiend grows upon him. The phantom hound swells into gigantic proportions : he confronts it, and sees it as it is. The mist clears away, and Mephistopheles comes forward from behind the stove in the dress of a travelling scholar.

I may be wrong : but it seems to me that the philosophy of Faust has played him false ; that, in his longings for the real, he has mistaken the perishable for the imperishable ; that he has been led on from refining to refining till he has well-nigh ended in absolute materialism. "There is small chance of truth at the goal, where there is not childlike humility at the starting-post."

Professor Masson has remarked the change that has come upon the Spirit of Evil during the six thousand years of his gradual degradation. Milton's Satan was ashamed of the looks of sorrow and reproach which he would be sure to meet from his brother Archangels in Heaven. But Mephistopheles has no such misgivings any longer. He plays the rascal in Heaven with a brazen front, and in a tone of most impudent bravado. He acts precisely the same part towards Faust in his first interviews. Yet I think we can discover a touch of real despair in his language, when pressed by Faust to intimate

his avocation. Faust says :—"I understand you now :

"Wholesale annihilation won't prevail,  
So you're beginning on a smaller scale."

To which Mephistopheles replies, (as I think) half in remorse, half in scorn :—

"And to say truth, as yet with small success.  
Oppos'd to nothingness, the world,  
This clumsy mass, subsisteth still ;  
Not yet is it to ruin hurl'd,  
Despite the efforts of my will.  
Tempests and earthquakes, fires and flood, I've tried ;  
Yet land and ocean still unchang'd abide.  
And then of beasts and men, the accursed brood,  
Neither o'er them can I extend my sway.  
What countless myriads have I swept away !  
Yet ever circulates the fresh young blood."

This bitterness flashes out more than once in the drama. When Faust is closing his compact with Mephistopheles, he declares that he craves excitement, that excitement is the sphere of man, that the scope of all his powers thenceforth would be to know in his own heart all human weal and woe, to grasp in thought the lofty and the deep, and to dilate his individual mind to all the thoughts and passions of men. Mephistopheles answers (I think with more of sorrow than of satire) :—

"Oh, credit me, who, still as ages roll,  
Have chew'd this bitter fare from year to year,  
No mortal, from the cradle to the bier,

Digests the ancient leaven. Know, this Whole  
Doth for the Deity alone subsist !  
He in eternal brightness doth exist,  
Us into darkness he hath brought, and here  
Where day and night alternate, is your sphere."

Again, is there not a depth of despair, at which  
one might shudder, revealed in the words in which  
Mephistopheles declares himself

"Part of that power which still  
Produceth good, while it deviseth ill?"

If I had space here, I should dilate upon what  
seems to me a most instructive part of the drama :  
I mean the scene where Faust concludes his agree-  
ment with the Spirit of Evil. I shall merely notice  
one feature of this dialogue, which I have not seen  
dissected by the critics. Faust yearns for the  
Infinite, at first, vaguely and indefinitely ; but he  
gradually becomes reckless ; and pronounces a  
withering anathema upon love, and hope, and  
faith, and, more than all, upon patience. Here he  
becomes really devilish ; he treads the same path  
that Satan has trod before him ; he becomes  
actually like Mephistopheles in some respects.  
Further on, he determines to close his ears to the  
problem which has vexed and harassed him so  
much throughout his life. He resolves to enjoy  
activity for the sake of activity, to forget the future  
of eternity, to be utterly indifferent as to whether  
hereafter we shall love or hate, and whether, also,

in those distant spheres there is a depth below or a height above. Here he becomes more like the great Fallen Spirit who is huxtering with him for his soul ; and here Mephistopheles breaks in—"In this mood you may venture it !" A little more of this dexterous handling and Faust is confirmed in the despair of his tempter—

"I feel it, I have heap'd upon my brain  
The gather'd treasure of man's thought in vain,  
And when at length from studious toil I rest,  
No power, new-born, springs up within my breast,  
A hair's breadth is not added to my height,  
I am no nearer to the infinite."

I pass to the next scene, in which Mephistopheles, to keep his hand in, and not to lose time, while waiting for Faust, dons the Doctor's long gown, and (literally) plays the devil with the Student. The whole scene bears out Professor Masson's observation, that Mephistopheles feels a necessity for eternal activity, no matter of what sort, provided only that it will produce as much disorder as possible in the universe. I shall only pause to notice one passage, where, it seems to me, the ancient splendour of Satan's remorse is faintly shadowed. The young Student says that he has no taste for jurisprudence as a profession. And here Mephistopheles seems to look back upon his former self, and upon the grandeur of his rebellion, when he answers with disguised bitterness :—

"Laws are a fatal heritage,—  
Like a disease, an heir-loom dread ;  
Their course they trail from age to age,  
And furtively abroad they spread. . . .  
That thou'rt a grandson is thy woe !  
*But of the law on man impress'd*  
*By nature's hand, there's ne'er a thought."*

The scene which follows, in Auerbach's Cellar in Leipsic, is to the same effect, only that here Mephistopheles has no very great object in view; and goes about his business in the spirit of aimless devilry (or "devilment") which is only worthy of himself and of the "fast" young man of modern society. Indeed, as Carlyle has suggested, there is a perfect analogy between the two characters in more points than one. Mephistopheles seems to realize an immense satisfaction in frightening a few poor creatures who are half drunk, by turning their wine into fire, and by deluding them into the dangerous hallucination that their reciprocal noses are clustering grapes, and that it would be a fine thing to use their knives upon them. In a precisely analogous spirit the "fast" youth rejoices in a tavern-row, and generally disappears, like Mephistopheles, the moment his position becomes critical. In the Witch's Kitchen Mephistopheles amuses himself at the expense of that lady by smashing her glasses and gallipots. In a similar spirit the "fast" young gentleman defaces hall-doors and demolishes windows, for no reason very obvious to the student of



human nature. But the acme of fast humanity finds its analogy in the cruel flirtation of Mephistopheles with Martha.

Another point in the character of Mephistopheles is his confirmed and habitual satire. Sarcasm is often the rage of little minds ; but it is more frequently as the withered leaves of a majestic lightning-blasted tree, the decayed energy of a crushed and ruined spirit. Sarcasm (if I may make the distinction) is a grander thing than satire. The term, coming from *σαρκάζω*, to tear flesh like dogs, to bite the lips in rage, conveys a deeper moral significance than a word derived from the *olio* of the Romans. There was sarcasm in the Satan of Milton ; majestic sarcasm in his blasphemy, like the crash of discord on a noble organ. But Mephistopheles is less sarcastic than satirical, I think. He is altogether a much smaller spirit than the ruined Archangel of Milton. He has grown shrivelled and puny in his long experience of persevering evil. There is an esoteric satire on man lurking in the song which Goethe puts into the mouth of Mephistopheles, the song beginning—

“ Once on a time a monarch  
Possess’d a splendid flea,  
The which he fondly cherish’d,  
As his own son were he ! ”

But the blasphemy has lost its thunder, as its author has lost his sublimity. Mephistopheles has

come to be mean even in his satire ; while an Archangel, though a ruined Archangel, he was imperial in his blasphemy. Could anything be meaner than the satire in which he indulges in his conversations with the Student, where he sums up the essentials of a medical practitioner?—

“ Learn how to treat the sex, of that be sure ;  
Their thousand *ahs* and *ohs*  
The sapient doctor knows,  
He from a single point alone can cure.  
Assume the decent tone of courteous ease,  
You have them then to humour as you please.  
First a diploma must belief infuse,  
That you in your profession take the lead ;  
You then at once those easy freedoms use,  
For which another many a year must plead ;  
Learn how to feel with nice address  
The dainty wrist ;—and how to press,  
With furtive glance, the tender waist,  
And feel how tightly it is lac’d.”

Madame de Staël has well remarked that “there is in the discourse of Mephistopheles a profound irony which bears upon the entire creation, and which judges of the universe as a bad book, of which the Devil is the critic.”

A more striking and instructive feature in the character of the degraded Mephistopheles is his total want of sympathy. The Satan of Milton, as has been observed, sympathizes with the innocence of Adam and Eve in spite of envy. But in respect

of sympathy all traces of the Archangel have vanished from Mephistopheles. This want of sympathy, which is essentially diabolic, appears first in the *Prologue in Heaven*, where he says of man—

“The little god o’ the world keeps the same stamp,  
As wonderful as on creation’s day :—  
A little better would he live, hadst thou  
Not given him a glimpse of Heaven’s light  
Which he calls reason, and employs it only  
To live more beastily than any beast.  
With reverence to your Lordship be it spoken,  
He’s like one of those long-legged grasshoppers,  
Who flits and jumps about, and sings for ever  
The same old song i’ the grass. There let him lie,  
Burying his nose in every heap of dung.”<sup>1</sup>

And again in the same prologue, he says :—

“The full fresh cheeks of youth are food for me,  
And if a corpse knocks, I am not at home.  
For I am like a cat—I like to play  
A little with the mouse before I eat it.”<sup>2</sup>

What a contrast to the soliloquy in *Paradise* ! Curious, too, that he is unable to sympathize with the aspiring Faust, who is so like his former self ! In the *Walpurgis-Night* on the *Hartz Mountains*, indeed, he exhibits what might at first sight be mistaken for a strong and vivid sympathy ; but it is in reality a fiendish exultation at the disorder he has produced. While Faust rhapsodizes on the splen-

<sup>1</sup> The translation here is Shelley’s.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Shelley’s rendering.—ED.

dour of the midnight scene, Mephistopheles only rejoices in the boom of the thunder and the howling of the tempest in the giant-snouted crags.

Still more instructive is it to consider what was the peculiar attraction presented by Mephistopheles to Faust. To understand this clearly we must examine a little more closely the state of mind to which Faust had been reduced previous to his first acquaintance with Mephistopheles. This is by no means so difficult now as it may have been at the time of the first appearance of the drama, when there was nothing but the *Sorrows of Werther* to foreshadow the sufferings of Faust. Since then, indeed, the character of Faust has become almost a stock-character in literature, and much light is cast upon it by Byron's *Manfred* and Bailey's *Festus*, to say nothing of *Cain*, and the confessions of Herr Diogenes Teufelsdröckh. Faust had grown weary of aspiring without faith or hope. He had passed the fresh days of his youth and his early manhood in a vain struggle after truth and universal knowledge, and the objects which he pursued with so much quenchless avidity had baffled him and vanished from his grasp. He has reached that abyss of despairing scepticism, the opposite existence to enthusiasm, which plays so large a part in modern literature, and which is, perhaps, a type of the earnestness of the age. Before, he yearned to see and to know more of the Deity; gradually the desire

became more and more his master, till he even aspired (perhaps unconsciously) to rank with the Deity himself. This was the poetico-religious enthusiasm of Faust. Was it other than inevitable that, when baffled and mocked by this mirage of the intellect, he should sink weary and spirit-broken and void of trust on the barren burning sands where he had journeyed, so lonely and withal so patient in his visionary hope? Was it other than inevitable that he should listen in very hopelessness to the demon's whisper, "believe no more;" that he should clutch at despair and make it his, now that hope was for him no longer? Even here the tempter is at his side. Even here the lure held out to him in such blinding colours is *freedom*—freedom from trammels—action, excitement, vigour, and the warmth and passion of youth renewed. Little marvel that the wise man fell. But, besides the attractions of the promises of Mephistopheles, it seems to me that, although Faust did not altogether feel with him, yet there was something in the similarity of the positions of the two,—of the fallen Man and the fallen Archangel,—which invested the latter with a great and powerful attraction. "Like to like" is a principle in the philosophy of human affinities which, I think, admits not of exception. Observation will always detect some one point at least of similarity between a Macbeth and a Lady Macbeth, between a Jezebel and an Ahab.


Now, Mephistopheles resembled Faust in *this*: he too had aspired and failed; he too had accepted the "Everlasting No" as his destiny; and he also writhed and was impatient beneath the intolerable load. The winter of discontent which had been *his* bitter curse for ages upon ages was the new phase of spiritual existence into which Faust had just entered. There must have been an irresistible magnetism in his satire, a hideous sympathy with his resolute acceptance of negation.

The sharpness and cleverness displayed by Mephistopheles have been dwelt upon at considerable length by Professor Masson, and it only remains for me to cite a few instances where these are brought forward most prominently in the drama. "*Eritis sicut Deus, scientes bonum et malum*"—Mephistopheles indeed *knows* good, but he thoroughly *understands* evil. His knowledge of the world—that is to say, of the darkened hemisphere of the moral world—is truly amazing. In the first interview with Faust he successively sneers at moral excellence, at the order of the universe, at the noble aspirations of poetry, at the search for truth so eagerly prosecuted by the speculative mind of man. In his conversation with the Student, he scoffs at science, law, theology, and metaphysics, and lays bare all their weak points with the practised knife of one who is familiar with every secret of moral disease. In his peregrinations with Faust,

he introduces him to the most loathsome scenes of vice with an *Io triumphe* over the ruin which he himself has created. In the disgusting atmosphere of the Witch's Kitchen he seems perfectly at home ; he calls the monkeys "charming creatures ;" he speaks of the apparition of the innocent Gretchen as "the six days' labour of a god who doth himself cry bravo at the end ;" he flirts with the Witch in the same style as he afterwards flirts with Martha, and calls her "an incomparable Sibyl," with a diabolically complimentary leer. When Faust for the first time beholds Margaret, he twits him in the flippant vein of a man of the world ; he banters him upon his eagerness to possess her, as a French gallant, a "gay Lothario who would pluck each floweret from its stalk ;" and he recommends him to trifle with his love in order to give piquancy to the capture when accomplished. He simulates the frenzy of love with a sepulchral attempt at humour—

"By love despis'd ! By Hell's fierce fires I curse,  
Would I could make my imprecation worse ! . . .  
I'd yield me to the devil instantly,  
Did it not happen that myself am he !"

It has been truly said that when the depraved man makes a jest of his depravity, the jest is generally a failure, except to those who are equally depraved. The cleverness of Mephistopheles is singularly displayed in the by-play with Martha, the mock-heroic of the loves of Gretchen and Faust—



a scene which, when enacted on the stage, awakens inextinguishable laughter among "the gods." But the crowning achievement of his villainous dexterity is the combination by which he manages to effect the murder of Valentine by the hand of his sister's destroyer.

The Mephistophilis of Kit Marlowe's *Tragicall Historie of Doctor Faustus* presents a curious contrast both to Milton's Satan and to the Mephistopheles of Goethe. Marlowe's Mephistophilis appears first in a hideous form, which shocks the nerves of Doctor Faustus to such a degree that he begs of the Devil to disappear, and to come next time in the guise of a Franciscan Friar. *Cucullus non facit monachum*. Mephistophilis declares himself to be a *servant* of Lucifer. He gives as the reason of his master's desire to obtain the soul of Faustus the verse,

"Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris."

His performances are even more undignified than those of Goethe's Mephistopheles. As an instance, I would mention the scene where he and Doctor Faustus at the Pope's banquet snatch away the dishes invisibly, strike His Holiness a severe blow in the face, and administer a sound drubbing to the Friars, while in the act of exorcising them with bell, book, and candle. In general Faustus is the motive will, and Mephistophilis the mechanical instrument. He does not even suggest the devilry which Faustus



performs. On the other hand, in his language he rises here and there almost to the dignity of Milton's Satan. Everyone knows Milton's lines—

“The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.”

Compare with these the following passages :—

Faustus asks—

“Where are you damned ?

*Mephistophilis.* In hell.

*Faustus.* How comes it, then, that thou art out of hell ?

*Mephistophilis.* Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it :  
Think'st thou that I, that saw the face of God,  
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,  
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells,  
In being deprived of everlasting bliss ?  
O, Faustus, leave these frivolous demands,  
Which strike a terror to my fainting soul !”

And again—

“Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscrib'd  
In one self-place, but where we are is hell ;  
And where hell is, there must we ever be :  
And, to be short, when all the world dissolves,  
And every creature shall be purified,  
All places shall be hell that are not heaven.”

Professor Anster, in the preface to his much admired translation of *Faust*, speaking of the difficulties that beset the translator of that drama, seems to imply that Mephistopheles is the demon of the stage and the nursery, rather than an actual devil, and that Goethe has bestowed upon him a puppet-


show sort of existence. In estimating a work of high genius, men of the greatest abilities will form the most opposite judgments. I am not aware of any other authorities who have adopted the singular view of Professor Anster ; but Carlyle, Masson, Lewes, and, I think, Coleridge, have pronounced on the opposite side.

Professor Anster remarks that Mephistopheles speaks almost a different dialect from Faust ; he uses a large number of Swabian words, or words employed in a sense different from the pure German. I would suggest, however, that this device may have been employed by Goethe for purposes of effect—to render more marked the contrast between the two leading characters of the drama ; or it may have been employed for a moral purpose—to deepen the spectator's dislike of the character before him, by associating with its many repellent qualities the marked appearance of vulgarity and meanness.

The observation of Professor Anster suggests a curious feature of the character of Mephistopheles which is displayed by the language he habitually uses. I allude to the *cast* of language in which his thoughts are moulded. It will be found on examination to be a language of scientific accuracy rather than of poetic colouring—photographic rather than picturesque. There are two habits of regarding the objects of thought ; the one omitting those minute

and delicate shades and tones which give reality to the picture, and contenting itself with the hard clear outline ; the other comprehending all these. The former is the mark of the mathematical, the latter of the poetical, mind. Now, the latter was characteristic of Faust, the former was essentially distinctive of Mephistopheles.

I can imagine no sort of criticism more valuable in its results than the criticism of which Mr. Masson has given us a specimen. Surely, to the poetical power which creates a character the critical power which represents it adequately and artistically is a close and useful ally. There are gentlemen of the old school whose criticisms of Shakespeare do not go much farther than the general remarks, that "Iago was a most determined scoundrel, and Desdemona a persecuted saint." Perhaps they are greater proficient in the art than either they themselves or those that laugh at them may at all imagine. It is certainly of considerable practical value to realize a great poet's conception of a determined scoundrel or a persecuted saint. And to know the Stagirite by heart, or to be able to talk æsthetics out of Schlegel *stans pede in uno*, is a nice and enviable accomplishment. But Mr. Masson has united a profound knowledge of the principles of art to his own constructive genius, and so has done good service to literature, as an able and masterly exponent of one of the grandest conceptions in fiction. For, to create a new character



in literature, to bequeath to the world a Hamlet, a Richard, a Lear, is to confer upon humanity a gift not less precious than the discovery of some latent energy of nature. Goethe has done this, Goethe has painted a magnificent conception, destined not for an age, but for all time. Instead of joining in the applausive or detractive buzz of the crowd of minor critics—a jargon composed of art-phrases and arbitrary canons,—Professor Masson has been content to sit down before the master's canvas, and to sketch for himself and for his readers a copy of the most commanding figure in the majestic group before him, faithfully representing every shadow and minutest line, and not daring to disturb or to diminish.

## EDGAR ALLAN POE.

EDGAR ALLAN POE was born in Virginia, in January, 1811, and died on the 9th October, 1849, at the age of thirty-eight years, having bequeathed to the world a volume of poems, a collection of tales, an essay on the universe, and a large number of eccentric miscellanies and marginalia. We have four excellent pictures of his life and his character, drawn by four of his most intimate friends. The Rev. Mr. Griswold, his literary executor, has written a biography, grim, harsh, and trenchant; the outlines hard and vigorous; the morality stern, orthodox, and inexorable. Mrs. Osgood, the poetess, has left us her reminiscences of Edgar Poe, written on her death-bed,—reminiscences which breathe of feminine kindness and romantic admiration, and which are in direct contrast to the memoir of Griswold. Next, we have an estimate of his genius and a sketch of his life by the poet Lowell, an admirer of Poe, and a critic of considerable analysis. Then there is a paper on the *Death of Edgar Allan Poe*, by another American poet, Willis, whose morality is not less strict and exacting than that of Mr.


Griswold, although he qualifies much of his disparagement by "extenuating circumstances." Lastly, Mr. James Hannay, the novelist, has dexterously selected the best passages of Poe's life and the best points of his character from these four memoirs, and suffused them all with a profusion of rose-water sentimentalism. From these materials it will be the object of the present paper to reconstruct a sketch of the life of Poe, balancing conflicting evidence, and presenting what appears to be the true picture with as much fulness and clearness as the limits of space will permit.

His father, the fourth son of a distinguished American general, was engaged in the study of law in Baltimore, when, having suddenly fallen in love with an actress, he committed the further indiscretion of eloping with her and marrying her. Poverty soon obliged him to abandon the toga for the buskin. He became himself an actor, and for six or seven years wandered about through the United States, performing in the theatres of the principal cities with his wife, and leading with her a vagrant and poverty-stricken life. Husband and wife died within a few weeks of each other, in Richmond, leaving three children upon the world, in utter destitution.

The second of these children was Edgar, "a boy of remarkable beauty and precocious wit." He was adopted by a wealthy English merchant, Mr. John

Allan by name, and it was generally understood that this gentleman intended to make him heir to his estates. He indulged him, petted him, and spoiled him. "Nothing," says Mr. Griswold, "was permitted which could break his spirit. He must be the master of his master, or not have any." What influence this treatment may have exercised upon his future life it is impossible strictly to determine; but it is not going too far to say that much, very much, of his selfishness and irregularity is traceable to the ill-judged indulgence of his adoptive father.

In 1816 he accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Allan to Great Britain; and, after visiting the scenes and cities most interesting to a foreigner, went to school at Stoke Newington, near London, where he remained six years. He gives a fine description of his school-days in his story of *William Wilson*, and finishes in these words a picture worthy of the pencil of Washington Irving:—"The morning's awakening, the nightly summons to bed; the conings, the recitations; the periodical half-holidays and perambulations; the playground, with its broils, its pastimes, its intrigues; these, by a mental sorcery long forgotten, were made to involve a wilderness of sensation, a world of rich incident, an universe of varied emotion, of excitement the most passionate and spirit-stirring. 'Oh, le bon temps, que ce siècle de fer!'" Truly this may be said to



have been the golden time of Poe's life ; a time of pleasant childish reverie and innocent boyish romance ; a time rich in the accumulation of images beautiful and noble—the “ large, rambling, Elizabethan house, in the misty-looking village ; ” the “ gigantic and gnarled trees,” and the “ houses excessively ancient ; ” the “ venerable old town,” with “ its deeply shadowed avenues,” and its “ thousand shrubberies,” wherein, he tells us, he has “ thrilled with indefinable delight at the deep hollow note of the church-bell, breaking each hour, with sullen and sudden roar, upon the stillness of the dusky atmosphere in which the fretted Gothic steeple lay embedded and asleep.”


In 1822 this quiet dream of boyhood was broken up. In this year he returned to the United States, passed some months at an academy in Richmond, and proceeded thence to the University of Charlottesville, where (say his biographers in mournful unison) “ he led a very dissipated life.” The fact is, he had imbibed the fashion of the time. He had acquired a veneration for Byronism and the Satanic. Accordingly, he was not only the best scholar of his class, but the wildest and most dissolute student in the University. He was an expert fencer, an able draughtsman, and “ a ready and eloquent conversationist and declaimer.” He was noted for feats of strength, although his personal appearance was delicate and refined. On one occasion he swam



for a bet from Richmond to Warwick, a distance of nearly eight miles, against a tide running probably from two to three miles an hour. This reminds us of the celebrated feat of Lord Byron, and it was probably undertaken from a similar motive. Although furnished with a liberal supply of money by Mr. Allan, the debts he had managed to accumulate were enormous; and, after a brief and reckless career of gambling and intemperance, he was expelled from the University.

It would be supererogatory and out of place to pause here to moralize. But it is hardly possible that this early public stigma should have operated otherwise than detrimentally on his character. It must have dealt a terrible blow to his self-respect; and it rendered him desperate, as we shall see.

His guardian having refused to accept some of the drafts with which he had paid his losses in gaming, Poe wrote him an abusive letter, and left America for the Mediterranean, with the purpose of assisting the Greeks in their struggle with the Turks. This is one of the most interesting periods of his life. It shows how seriously, in the first place, he was infected with the dangerous epidemic of Byronism. In the second place, Mr. Hannay says sentimentally, "I like to think of Poe in the Mediterranean;" and there can be no doubt that his sailings in those blue waters must have contributed much to the gorgeous colouring of his



higher imaginings. On the other hand, too, the vagabond life he led through Europe must have afforded him many a deep insight into the "haunts of horror and crime," and the lower and more appalling phases of humanity. For, it seems, he never reached his destination ; and, after wandering no one knows where, emerged from obscurity, no one knows how, in a low tavern at St. Petersburg, where the American minister was summoned one morning to save him from penalties incurred in a drunken debauch. . Through the ambassador's intercession he was set at liberty, and enabled to return to the United States.

On his return, Mr. Allan forgave him, and with much trouble procured for him, at his own urgent request, an appointment to a scholarship in the Military Academy. The prodigal son applies himself for a few weeks with great assiduity ; but immediately again plunges into dissipation, neglects his duties, and disobeys orders. The result is, that, at the end of ten months, he is cashiered.

He again went to Richmond, and was again received into the family of Mr. Allan with open arms. He did not remain long. His patron had married a lady some years his junior, and with this lady Poe, according to his own account, had a quarrel. The writer of an *eulogium* upon the life and genius of Poe, however, thus refers to this passage in his history :—"The story of the other side

is different ; and, if true, throws a dark shade upon the quarrel, and a very ugly light upon Poe's character. We shall not insert it," he continues, "because it is one of those relations which, we think with Sir Thomas Browne, should never be recorded,—being 'verities whose truth we fear, and heartily wish there were no truth therein.'" Wherever the truth may lie, it is certain that Poe was dismissed from the house ; and it is singular that Mr. Allan never spoke to him afterwards till the day of his death, nor was Edgar Poe's name mentioned in his will.


Soon after his expulsion from the Military Academy, Poe published his first volume of poems, which met with rather a favourable reception. He was induced by his success to embark in literature as a profession,—that is to say, he became a contributor to the journals. But, being unable to obtain a living in this way, he enlisted in the army as a private. "He was recognized," we are told, "by officers who had known him at the Military Academy ; and efforts were made to obtain a commission for him, when it was discovered by his friends that he had deserted."

He next appears as the successful competitor for a prize for the best story, awarded by the proprietor of the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor*. When he presented himself to be paid, he is described as "thin and pale even to ghastliness ;" "his whole appear-


ance indicating sickness and the utmost destitution ;" " a well-worn frock-coat concealing the absence of a shirt, and imperfect boots disclosing the want of hose."

For some weeks after this event his prospects were brighter, but his habits of dissipation were little bettered. He wrote brilliant articles for the *Southern Literary Messenger*, and was appointed editor of the journal. But his repeated irregularities induced a quarrel with the proprietor, and he was dismissed in the early part of the year 1837. " On receiving a month's salary," says Mr. Griswold, " he gave himself up to habits which only necessity restrained at Baltimore. For a week he was in a condition of brutish drunkenness, and Mr. White dismissed him. When he became sober, however, he had no resource but in reconciliation ; and he wrote letters and induced acquaintances to call upon Mr. White with professions of repentance and promises of reformation. . . . Mr. White was reconciled, and a new contract was arranged." But Poe repeated the offence almost immediately, and this second fall was too much for the endurance of his "generous though methodical employer."

About this time he married his cousin, Virginia Clemm, a gentle and beautiful girl, whose patient and loving character we shall hereafter consider. His life from this time forth may be lightly passed over, as it is but a reiteration of what we have



already seen,—improvidence, dissipation, and ingratitude, followed by remorse, abject apologies, and resolutions of amendment for the future ; to be again followed inevitably by drunkenness, with its hideous train of accompanying evils. “Edgar Allan Poe,” says the *Edinburgh Review*, “was incontestably one of the most worthless persons of whom we have any record in the world of letters. Many authors may have been as idle ; many as improvident ; some as drunken and dissipated ; and a few, perhaps, as treacherous and ungrateful ; but *he* seems to have succeeded in attracting and combining, in his own person, all the floating vices which genius had hitherto shown itself capable of grasping in its widest and most eccentric orbit.” This is, perhaps, a little too severe ; but we can hardly call it unjust. In the character of Poe his biographers have looked in vain for virtues of the higher order ; yet I think we may discover them in the love which he bore to his wife and his mother-in-law, from whose lips no complaints of his conduct have ever sounded. His vices, on the contrary, were indeed so manifold as to merit the stigma of the *Edinburgh*. With Mr. Burton, proprietor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, he engaged himself as chief editor for more than a year, at the expiration of which time Burton went out of town to fulfil a professional engagement, leaving material and directions for completing the next number of the magazine in four days. “He was absent nearly a fortnight, and on



returning he found that his printers in the meanwhile had not received a line of copy; but that Poe had prepared the prospectus of a new monthly, and obtained transcripts of his subscription and account-books, to be used in a scheme for supplanting him. He encountered his associate late in the evening at one of his accustomed haunts, and said, 'Mr. Poe, I am astonished; give me my MSS., so that I can attend to the duties you have so shamefully neglected, and when you are sober we will settle.' Poe interrupts him with 'Who are you that presume to address me in this manner? Burton, I am—the editor—of the Penn Magazine—and you are—hiccup—a fool!'"—"Of course," adds the Rev. Mr. Griswold, from whom I have taken the elegant anecdote verbatim, "this ended his relations with the *Gentleman's*."

There is a story of Poe which is not very generally known, but which is too well authenticated to be doubted. Poe's virulent and insatiable persecution of Longfellow is notorious in America. It began thus. Poe accused Longfellow of having purloined the idea of *The Haunted Palace*, and served it up in his poem *The Beleaguered City*. Now, it has been placed beyond doubt that Professor Longfellow's poem was written two or three years before the publication of *The Haunted Palace* by Poe; and that during a portion of that time the MS. was in Poe's possession!

In 1844 he removed to New York, where his

society was much courted in the highest circles. About this period he published *The Raven*, which absolutely took by storm the literary world of America. Still, in the zenith of his popularity, his miserable propensities were not abandoned. He was frequently seen reeling about the streets in a drunken somnambulism; and one very discreditable story is related of him, which unfortunately, like the last, is too well supported to admit of question. "He borrowed fifty dollars from a distinguished literary woman of South Carolina, promising to return it in a few days, and when he failed to do so, and was asked for a written acknowledgment of the debt that might be exhibited to the husband of the friend who had thus served him, he denied all knowledge of it, and threatened to exhibit a correspondence which he said would make the woman infamous, if she said anything more on the subject. Of course there had never been any such correspondence; but when Poe heard that a brother of the slandered party was in quest of him, for the purpose of taking the satisfaction supposed to be due in such cases, he sent for Dr. Francis and induced him to carry to the gentleman his retraction and apology, with a statement, which seemed true enough at the moment, that Poe was 'out of his head.'"

In 1848 he published his celebrated lecture on the Cosmogony of the Universe, under the title of *Eureka: A Prose Poem*. In the year previous his

wife had died. From this time he did not write much ; he had fought with the conductors of the chief magazines for what he had written, and they ceased to solicit his contributions. At this period a rumour was afloat that he was about to be married to a celebrated literary lady, "one of the most brilliant women of New England," to whom he had addressed the impassioned lines in blank verse, *To Helen*. They were not married, however ; and this is the story of the way in which the engagement was broken off :—"He left town one evening, and was seen next day staggering through the streets of the city which was the lady's home, and in the evening—that should have been the evening before the bridal,—in his drunkenness he committed at her house such outrages as made necessary a summons of the police."<sup>1</sup>


The next year was passed in utter abandonment. He sank lower than ever as the months rolled on. But towards the autumn of the year there seemed to be a glimmering prospect of reform. Renewing his acquaintance with a lady whom he had known in his youth, he engaged to marry her, and wrote to his friends that he should pass the remainder of his days in scenes endeared by all the pleasantest recollections of his early years. However, on his journey to New York, to prepare for his marriage, he stopped at Baltimore, intending to

<sup>1</sup> Griswold, p. 30.—E. J. A.




leave in an hour or two for Philadelphia, and, giving his trunk to a porter, he entered a tavern to obtain some refreshment. Here he met some of his former acquaintances, and a carouse ensued which lasted until midnight. In a fearful state of drunkenness, he was exposed during the late hours, and in the morning he was carried speechless to a hospital; and there, on the evening of Sunday, the 7th of October, 1849, he died, at the age of thirty-eight years.

As the views in a stereoscope will not assume the proportions of life or reality unless they be taken at different angles, so a man's character, seen from a single point of view, will not be just and perfect. Mr. Willis and Mrs. Osgood have taken a very favourable estimate of Poe. Mr. Willis declares that, during his connection with him as editor of a daily paper, Poe was "invariably practical and industrious." His words are these:—"With his pale, beautiful, and intellectual face, as a reminder of what genius was in him, it was impossible, of course, not to treat him always with deferential courtesy, and, to our occasional request that he would not probe too deep in a criticism, or that he would erase a passage coloured too highly with his resentments against society and mankind, he readily and courteously assented—far more yielding than most men, on points so excusably sensitive." He adds that "with a *single glass* of




wine his whole nature was reversed, the demon became uppermost, and, though none of his usual signs of intoxication were visible, his *will* was palpably insane." Mr. Willis assures us, however, that in this reversed character it was never *his* chance to see him.

Mrs. Osgood, in the notice of Poe written upon her death-bed, has declared that "although she frequently *heard* of aberrations on his part from the straight and narrow path, she never *saw* him otherwise than gentle, generous, well-bred, and fastidiously refined." His politeness in the drawing-room seems to have impressed this lady vastly. "There was a peculiar and irresistible charm," she says, "in the chivalric, graceful, and almost tender reverence with which he invariably approached all women who won his respect. It was this which first commanded and always retained my regard for him." She gives a beautiful description of the Poet in his simple home—beautiful, because it is altogether womanly; and there is something touching in her apology for the propensity which destroyed him. His wife imagined that the lady's influence over him had a restraining and beneficial effect. "It *had*," she says, "as far as this,—that, having solemnly promised me to give up the use of stimulants, he so firmly respected his promise and me as never once, during our whole acquaintance, to appear in my presence when in the slightest degree affected by



them." This is so naïve that we know not whether to smile or to frown at the earnest and loving record of a forbearance so remarkable.

But, sad a scamp as Edgar Poe undoubtedly was, there must have been something very loveable in him, seeing that he was so tenderly loved. "Man dreams of Fame while woman wakes to love." It is surely not too much to say that in all literary history there is nothing more beautiful to contemplate than the characters of Virginia, the wife, and Maria Clemm, the mother-in-law, of Poe. They watched over him and tended him, these "two beloved women," in sickness, in sorrow, in penury; and in worse than these—when the eye, whose eloquent fire they knew so well, was dull and vacant; when the lips no longer wore the well-known smile; and, instead of the fond trifling words of affection, the curses of the drunkard smote their hearts. And when Virginia died, the mother-in-law was more than a mother still. Winter after winter, for years, "thinly and insufficiently clad," she might be seen, in the great city, "going from office to office with a poem or an article on some literary subject, to sell—sometimes simply pleading in a broken voice that he was ill, and begging for him, mentioning nothing but that 'he was ill,' whatever might be the reason for his writing nothing,—and never, amid all her tears and recitals of distress, suffering one syllable to escape her lips that could



convey a doubt of him, or a complaint, or a lessening of pride in his genius and good intentions." . . . But let us draw a veil, in silence and respect, over this sacred sorrow.

One word about the personal appearance of Poe. He is said to have been "pale and beautiful," but, if so, the portrait prefixed to the American edition of his works is a libel upon his appearance. It is an intellectual face, but it is effeminate, and singularly wanting in manly firmness and fixedness of purpose. "His conversation," it is said, "was at all times almost supra-mortal in its eloquence. His voice was modulated with astonishing skill, and his large and variably expressive eyes looked repose or shot fiery tumult into theirs who listened, while his own face glowed, or was changeless in pallor, as his imagination quickened his blood or drew it back frozen to his heart. . . . He walked the streets in madness or melancholy, with lips moving in indistinct curses, or with eyes upturned in passionate prayer, (never for himself, for he felt, or professed to feel, that he was already damned, but) for their happiness who at the moment were objects of his idolatry;—or, with his glances introverted to a heart gnawed with anguish, and with a face shrouded in gloom, he would brave the wildest storms; and all night, with drenched garments, and arms beating the winds and rain, would speak as if to spirits."

We come now to speak of his poems, which, being intensely subjective, afford an index to his inner life. What his outer life was we have already seen. We are told by one of his biographers that "he never laughed, and rarely smiled." In his poetry it is the same—he never laughs and rarely smiles. His mouth is an open sepulchre. The jest is sepulchral, but it is true.

Yet, here and there, in the midst of the desolation and the gloom, a lovely picture flashes forth, and makes us yearn in pity towards a soul so gifted and so lost. In that exquisitely pathetic dirge of the "Lost Lenore" these lines will be remembered:—

"Her, the fair and debonair, that now so lowly lies,  
The life upon her yellow hair, but not within her eyes,—  
The life still there upon her hair, the death upon her eyes."

The poem in blank verse *To Helen*, breathes the same spirit of delicious reverie and rapturous expectancy that has rendered so popular the garden-song in *Maud*—

"There fell a silvery-silken veil of light,  
With quietude and sultriness and slumber,  
Upon the upturned faces of a thousand  
Roses that grew in an enchanted garden,  
Where no wind dared to stir except on tiptoe—  
Fell on the upturned faces of these roses  
That gave out, in return for the love-light,  
Their odorous souls in an ecstatic death—  
Fell on the upturned faces of these roses  
That smiled and died in the parterre, enchanted  
By thee and by the poetry of thy presence."


The sonnet to Maria Clemm, headed characteristically with the words "*To my Mother*," is pure and tender, and redolent of the true devotion of a warm human heart. There are few love-songs more beautiful and less morbid than *Eulalie*. *The Sleeper* is a desolate and melancholy poem in its aspect, as a whole; but in the following picture there is a richness in the colouring ample enough to atone for the wildness of the accessories:—

“All beauty sleeps!—and lo, where lies  
(Her casement open to the skies)  
Irene, with her destinies!  
—O lady bright, can it be right,  
This window open to the night?  
The wanton airs from the tree-top  
Laughingly through the lattice drop—  
The bodiless airs, a wizard rout,  
Flit through the chamber in and out,  
And wave the curtain canopy  
So fitfully—so fearfully—  
Above the closed and fringed lid  
'Neath which thy slumbering soul lies hid,  
That, o'er the floor and down the wall,  
Like ghosts the shadows rise and fall.  
O lady dear, hast thou no fear?  
Why and what art thou dreaming here?  
Sure thou art come o'er far-off seas,  
A wonder to these garden-trees!  
Strange is thy pallor! strange thy dress!  
Strange above all thy length of tress,  
And this all-solemn silentness!”

Not to multiply quotations *ad nauseam*, I will

merely allude to the opening stanzas of *The Haunted Palace*, the sonnet to *Zante*, the last stanza of the verses *To One in Paradise*, and the gorgeous arabesque *Al Aaraaf*,—all of which exhibit a beauty and a sweetness which contrast in strange fantastic relief with the darker tone of Poe's imagination.

Turning to the other and more generally recognized aspect of his poetry, *The Raven* naturally first presents itself to the mind. The popularity of *The Raven* is a fact which cannot be disputed, and may as well be accounted for, since to be popular is meritorious in itself, as evincing power to gratify some human instinct or stir some human passion. If the means be proved illegitimate, the composition is to be condemned ; but the burden of proof lies always with the objector. In the case before us, the author, in a very remarkable essay, has himself suggested certain causes to which he ascribes the result. But that essay lies under grave suspicion of being an afterthought ; and Poe, if not personally concerned, would have been the first to pronounce it too ingenious to be true. Poems, if not poets, are born, not made. Their origin is an hour of rapturous love, not the methodical toil of hammer and chisel upon a marble block. You cannot build your poem upon a skeleton ; and although Coleridge appears to have made first drafts in prose, they were all written at white heat, not reasoned out like syllogisms.



Moreover, Poe's theory suggests this grave objection, that it makes this poem (not explicitly, but by implication) not merely good, but the *best*, perhaps the only good one, that was ever written. It is not true that rich furniture is essential to poetry; witness the "dungeon horrible on all sides round"—the

"Sights of woe,  
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
And rest can never dwell"—


of a poet quite equal to our transatlantic paragon ! Neither is it true that the poetic grief is always of that tender and pensive character which he demands. Witness *Lear* and *Othello*, productions of one whom Poe could never appreciate, but yet who could have put *his* whole genius, poetry, and range of thought into the least of his second-class characters without disturbing its retiring position upon the stage. There can be little doubt that Poe's judgment upon these points was influenced largely by his love of opium. It made his whole mind run after the soothing and shadowy—grief in repose rather than anguish in action or despair in frenzy ; and hence *The Raven*, like almost all his poems, is a quiet and pensive soliloquy, hardly broken by a burst of absorbing passion. Above all, the virtue ascribed to its metre and refrain is insufficient, since these are valuable only in so far as they assist and express the leading sentiment of the piece. It was not more absurd of the *Quarterly Review* to ascribe



to Sir John Stevenson's music the entire success of Moore's *Irish Melodies*. Neither can the effect be ascribed to its metaphysical import. Few ordinary readers appear to be aware of that vague under-current; no one discovers it upon a first reading, or before its close; and yet the *attention* is riveted from the very opening. The reason seems to lie simply in its graphic and intense vividness of description,—what painters would call its “body.” Some poems are lauded for not having a word too much. The spell of *The Raven* lies in not having a word too little. Of course the strange reiteration in every verse is greatly conducive to this result, which becomes more important just as the incident is slight. In Campbell's *Hohenlinden*, where a great battle is the theme, the shadowy outline makes the scene terrible in its ghastliness. But the advent of the Raven to the chamber of the student is a very different theme. Milton describes not *Hell*—it is “darkness visible;” nor *Death*—

“If shape it might be call'd that shape had none,  
Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd . . .  
. . . . . What *seem'd* his head  
The *likeness* of a kingly crown had on.”

But he names the very dishes which Eve prepared for Raphael while her husband walked to meet him. The success of Poe's experiment depended entirely upon setting before the reader's mind a clear picture of his small but thrilling incidents.



Can anything be more graphic than the first epithet in the following series :—

“ But the *silken, sad, uncertain rustling* of each purple curtain ;”  
telling as it does, not merely of a *crisp* sound, but of that opulence in the tone for which there is no word, and aided by a subtle alliteration ? This craftiness of art has even blinded many to the absurdity of the only line which can be successfully impeached—

“ The censer swung

By seraphim, *whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted floor* ;”

where the critic is thrown off the scent by the very impudence of the hyperbole and vividness of the impossible description. Thus admirably does he describe the sudden horror of darkness :—

“ Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there, wondering, fearing,  
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before ;

But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave *no* token,  
And the only word there spoken was the *whispered* word  
‘ Lenore ! ’—

This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word  
‘ Lenore ! ’

Merely this and nothing more—”

but he expends a stanza upon the single thrill !  
Such is his description of the Raven itself—

“ . . . Thinking what this ominous bird of yore,  
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird of  
yore  
Meant ;”—

where *six* epithets, two of them reiterated, are boldly heaped upon a "fowl" before described as "large." Moreover, these pictures are accurate beyond the power of pencil. We *see* him shuddering at the open door; we *see* the tempest-ruffled bird; we *hear* the "croaking" of the "fowl" whose fiery eyes burn also into *our* "bosom's core;" and we *see* the final collapse of energy and hope, as it was seen, be sure, by the miserable bard himself in some wild moment of spasmodic effort, bitter, hopeless, and transient, as the lash of billows on the granite cliff that breaks them.

Is it hypocritical to remark, in conclusion, a striking exception to this pictorial truth? The Poet has been reading by lamplight. The brightness within is repeatedly contrasted with the exterior gloom; and when he seats himself in front of the bird, the lamplight "gloats over" the cushion and lining. Elevated as the bird was, and within a foot of the side of the apartment, it is clearly impossible that his shadow could be thrown upon the ground. The lamp, if above him, could not have been much so, and the sloping shadow would have been arrested immediately by the wall or door. This trivial slip is interesting for one reason only. Poe was a master in the art of marshalling his details (witness *The Golden-Bug*, and, in fact, all his stories). It is therefore very unlikely that he could have fallen into this palpable blunder if he had built up his poem

on those logical and laborious principles of construction [on] which he would have the world to believe [that he worked].

It is not my purpose to analyze any of the poems, or to map out the passages that are morbid or healthy. But, after a few remarks on the general character of the poetry, I will cite some passages from the poems themselves which seem to throw light upon the character of the man.

It is, in one word, the poetry of despair. The Spirit that animates it is ever, like Psyche, "letting sink her plumes till they sorrowfully trail in the dust." Rarely, very rarely, does she spread her gauzy wings for a flight into the higher regions of song. But the melancholy of Poe is different, not only in degree, but in kind, from the melancholy of all other poets. Less robust than the melancholy of Shakespeare, less divine than the melancholy of Milton, less ethereal than the melancholy of Shelley, the melancholy of Poe has its dwelling among the tombs. Sometimes indeed, but not often, a tender, tremulous loveliness appears amidst these ruins of a lofty soul,—as the smile of the penitent upon her death-bed, reluming the pale lips with a touch of the beauty and the glory which have vanished,—as the embers of a dying fire in a wide desolate room, rendering by the flickering gleams the ghastly forms of the darkness more ghastly,—as a violet pining alone beside a dark mountain tarn, bleak and

awful amid its wrinkled chasms,—or, as the one ray of sunlight that passes through the grating of a tomb once a day, lighting it feebly to its depths, and revealing the terror of the gloom within. I do not agree with Mr. Hannay that traces of spiritual emotion are not to be found in these poems. A single extract will suffice to unmask the fallacy of that assertion—

“ I stand amid the roar  
Of a surf-tormented shore,  
And I hold within my hand  
Grains of the golden sand—  
How few ! yet how they creep  
Through my fingers to the deep,  
While I weep—while I weep !  
O God ! can I not grasp  
Them with a tighter clasp ?  
O God ! can I not save  
*One* from the pitiless wave ? . . . ”

Yet, while Mr. Hannay glosses over some of the darkest passages of his life, and says that *Ulalume* is “gentle, and innocent, and fairy-like,” he can discern in the above lines “none of those traces of deep inward emotion which, like the marks of tears, we see on the face of so many a modern muse.”

The essential characteristic of the spirit of his poetry is despondency ; of its form, perfection of music. The former was to a large extent the result of his life. The latter pervades everything he has written, and is a singular phenomenon, in contrast

---

with the moral discord of his character. But the musical flow of his language was the product of deep calculation and elaborate care, as he has himself confessed; and as, on one occasion, when two musicians composed a piece, one at the wild will of his genius, the other by a mathematical calculation, an amateur at once perceived the difference; so the well-cultured ear will detect the difference between a line of Poe and a line of . . . Shelley, or of Keats. The general effect of his poetry is to depress, not to elevate, the feelings of the reader. This, I believe, is directly contrary to all canons of the art; and it could hardly have sprung from affectation, inasmuch as he himself has eulogized Tennyson in the very highest terms for his possession of the opposite faculty; calling him, in fact, "the noblest of poets" because his poetry is always the loftiest in itself, as well as the most elevating in its effects. And any one who reads the conclusion of his most eloquent essay *On the Poetic Principle*, will not fail to be struck by the wondrous divergence between his precepts and his practice. One of his critics has remarked that "there is nowhere discoverable in his poems a consciousness of moral responsibility;" and this, I very much fear, is nearly true. Perhaps it is more charitable than severe to say that Poe exhibits, *in his poems*, hardly any signs of a strong conscience.

Another marked peculiarity of his poetry is the

almost entire absence from it of the dramatic element. Although he has left us some fragments of an unfinished drama written in youth, yet he may be said to be the most subjective of the subjective poets. Now, excessive subjectivity is nothing more or less than a disease ; although it is by no means incompatible with the dramatic faculty of projecting the poet's own subjectivity into the creatures of his imagination. Shelley was an eminently subjective poet, and yet he has given us one of the best dramas of the century—[though], to use the expressive word of Coleridge, there is very little "aloofness" in it. . . . Subjectivity is, indeed, the great distinctive of modern poetry, whether dramatic [in form] or otherwise. . . . The fact of Poe's having attempted a drama is no proof whatever that his genius was twofold. I have said that the subjectivity of Poe was a disease ; and I believe that the students of his poetry will find in it more of despair than of remorse, more of the profound gloom of Dante's lost spirits wandering with wailing and gnashing of teeth beneath snows of fire, than of the agony and struggle of a man who wrestles with his sin, and still struggles and writhes for freedom, while the serpent is coiled around his every limb.

I will now cite a few individual passages from his poetry, which afford us glimpses of the character of the man. In *The Raven*, there is something more than ordinarily weird in the final stanzas ; and Poe's

genius was not sufficiently dramatic to warrant us in separating this and other similar expressions of despair from the man's own utterance, and in referring them altogether to the ideal characters in whose mouths they are put.

“ And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting  
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door ;  
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is  
dreaming,  
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on  
the floor ;  
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the  
floor

Shall be lifted—nevermore !”

In this poem, in the *Valley of Unrest*, in the *City in the Sea*, in *The Sleeper*, and indeed in the majority of his poems, the predominant sentiment is woe, deep and awful woe, despair without a glimmer of hope. Such seems to have been the prevailing habit of his mind. But enough of this ! Does the poetry of Poe give us no other revelation than this ? No other, I fear. The verses on the Colosseum, indeed, conclude with a jubilant burst of song, and there is much of the poetry of joy in *The Bells*. But, from all that I can find, the poetry of Edgar Poe tells but the one mournful and hopeless tale—the tale of a lofty and beautiful soul crumbled into a ruin, appalling and almost loathsome. The “ heart is ashen and sober ; the leaves are crisped and sere.”



Very singular, but not difficult to account for, is the morbidly vivid manner in which his imagination represents death, and the grave, and corruption. Singular too, and not so easily explained, is the seeming fascination wherewith he dwells on subjects like this. His tales are full of it. It meets us when least expected in his poems, like the door of the "legended tomb" in the "ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir." For example :

"So that her high-born kinsmen came  
And bore her away from me,  
To shut her up in a sepulchre  
In this kingdom by the sea."

And again :

"And over each quivering form,  
The curtain, like a funeral pall,  
Comes down with the rush of a storm."

Again :

"Over the lilies there that wave  
And weep above a nameless grave."

And—

"There open fanes and gaping graves  
Yawn level with the luminous waves."

The bold description of Death, in the *City in the Sea*, is another case in point. Once more, at the conclusion of *The Sleeper* is a passage which may be compared with the impassioned speech of Constance in *King John*—

"Death, death, O amiable lovely death !  
Thou odoriferous stench ! sound rottenness !"

The passage is this :—

“My love, she sleeps ! Oh, may her sleep,  
As it is lasting, so be deep !  
*Soft may the worms about her creep !*  
Far in the forest, dim and old,  
For her may some tall vault unfold—  
Some vault that oft hath flung its black  
And winged panels fluttering back,  
Triumphant, o’er the crested palls  
Of her grand family funerals—  
Some sepulchre, remote, alone,  
Against whose portal she hath thrown,  
In childhood, many an idle stone—  
Some tomb from out whose sounding door  
She ne’er shall force an echo more,  
Thrilling to think, poor child of sin !  
It was the dead who groaned within !”

It has been observed that Shakespeare’s plays exhibit this physical awe of death blended with a fascination in the thoughts of it. Lord Bacon, in his essay on *Death*, acknowledges the same physical fear ; “for the change is bitter, and the flesh would refuse to prove it.” The stronger the imagination, of course, the greater the fear, unless there be some counteracting influence. But the fascination I am unable to account for, except by referring it to the agency of the Imp of the Perverse. In the case of Poe there will be many who will attribute it to a darker cause.

Another remarkable fact about Poe’s poetry is, that, while it exhibits both love and affection, it shows nothing of the friendship of man to man.

The sonnet to Mrs. Clemm is the natural outcome of the purest and most genial affection. The little lyric to Frances Osgood, the poetess, is a true poem, and has an air of healthful tenderness about it of which Wordsworth would not need to be ashamed—

“Thou wouldst be loved?—then let thy heart  
From its present pathway part not !  
Being everything which now thou art,  
Be nothing which thou art not.  
So with the world thy gentle ways,  
Thy grace, thy more than beauty,  
Shall be an endless theme of praise,  
And love—a simple duty.”

But Poe was an Orestes who had no Pylades to soothe him in his struggles with the Furies. He perished for want of a friend.

It would be a great mistake, as I have said before, to pronounce that there was *nothing* but gloom in his poems. There is, besides, a genuine admiration of the beautiful in art and nature. “The beautiful Puritan pansies,” “the beauty which we worship in a star,” “the snows of the lolling lily,” “the viol, the violet, and the vine”—these are phrases, the embodiment of beauty in music, which the world will not willingly let die. In truth, in his earlier poems, except where he deliberately mimics Byron, there is every indication of a sweet and childlike veneration of the Beautiful, which was afterwards supplanted by an appetite for the False Sublime.

Comparing his earlier with his later poems, we may account for the moral inferiority of the latter by the simple fact that Edgar Poe in 1845 was himself morally inferior to Edgar Poe in 1827.

We pass to the Tales of Mystery, Imagination, and Humour, by which perhaps Edgar Allan Poe is chiefly known. These are so familiar, and they have been criticized so frequently and so well, that I cannot hope to offer any novel or original views on the subject. Two methods of criticism present themselves; either to review each of the tales separately, or to fix upon one or two which are specially characteristic of the author, and to analyze them. I believe the latter method to be the more useful, though it certainly is not the less difficult of the two. I begin, accordingly, with *The Fall of the House of Usher*. This is one of the most elaborately artistic of Poe's tales. From the opening description of "a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn," to the stupendous vision at the close of the story, not a sentence is not artistic, not a syllable is inserted without a due regard to the general effect. I shall endeavour to illustrate this remark by a brief analysis of the story. It begins with a "dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year," and as the shades of evening grow long the narrator finds himself within view of the melancholy House of Usher. The appearance of the House is described with a minute emphasis upon

its gloomiest features. Desolate and terrible—the bleak walls—the vacant eye-like windows—the few rank sedges—the few white trunks of decayed trees—these he regards with that utter depression of soul which he compares to the after-dream of a reveller upon opium, the bitter lapse into every-day life, the hideous dropping off of the veil. But the picture is not gloomy enough yet. In Poe's mind it still lacks a finishing touch. He who is supposed to tell the tale endeavours to remove the impression of gloom by a different arrangement of the particulars of the scene ; and, acting upon this idea, he “reins his horse to the precipitous brink of the black and lurid tarn that lies in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazes down—but with a shudder even more thrilling than before, upon the remodelled and inverted images of the grey sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.”

Then the mind is immediately diverted to a contemplation still more gloomy—the contemplation of the unhappy man to whom the sad House of Usher belongs. The solitariness and the mental disease of Roderick Usher are described with the same emphatic minuteness that characterizes all the writings of Poe. The letter he has sent to summon his friend gives evidence of nervous agitation. The writer speaks of acute bodily illness, of a mental disorder which oppresses him, and of an earnest

desire to see his best and indeed his only personal friend, with a view of attempting some alleviation of his malady. Suddenly the narrator remembers that the entire family of the Ushers lay in the direct, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain.

As this thought impresses his mind, a vague presentiment deepens down upon him. Observe the art whereby he connects his own sensations with the appearances of nature. "When I again uplifted my eyes to the house itself, from its image in the pool, there grew in my mind a strange fancy. I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity—an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the grey wall, and the silent tarn—a pestilent and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued." The "decayed trees," the "grey wall," the "silent tarn"—the rhythmical reiteration of these words, like a mournful refrain, is not without its effect upon the mind.

The next point is the description of the House, on a closer view, which is done with extraordinary vividness and in a very few words. "The discolouration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine

tangled net-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen ; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between the still perfect adaptation of parts and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. In this there was much that reminded one of the specious totality of old wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air. Beyond this indication of extreme decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zig-zag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn."

Entering the Gothic archway of the hall, a valet of stealthy step conducts him, in silence, through many a dark and intricate passage, to the study of the master. The objects which encounter him on the way are dwelt upon, and prepare the mind of the reader for the mournful portrait of Usher,—the carvings of the ceilings, the sombre tapestries of the walls, the ebon blackness of the floors, and the phantasmagoric armorial trophies which rattle to the vibration of the unwonted footsteps. One more touch completes the effect. "*On one of the staircases* I met the physician of the family. His counte-

nance, I thought, wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity. He accosted me with trepidation and passed on."

He enters the study, and the shadows fall more thickly on the reader's mind, and wrap it round in a deeper gloom. Windows, long, narrow, and pointed—the floor of black oak—feeble gleams of encrimsoned light—the remoter angles of the chamber, and the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling lost in the hovering darkness. The walls are hung with dark draperies; the general furniture is profuse, comfortless, antique. "I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable woe hung over and pervaded all."

Then the appearance of Usher is described, and the mind sinks slowly and gradually deeper and deeper down into the gulfs of despondency. From want of space, I must here reverse the process of Poe, and attempt to present in a few rough lines what has been wrought up by him in minute and elaborate detail.

Roderick Usher is the victim of an anomalous terror. The ghastly pallor of his skin, the miraculous lustre of his eye, bespeak a mind diseased. His action is alternately vivacious and sullen. "His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision to that species of energetic concision—that abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation



—that leaden, self-balanced, and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement." He is so fearfully nervous, and suffers so much from a morbid acuteness of the senses, that "the odours of flowers are oppressive ; his eyes are tortured by even a faint light ; and there are but peculiar sounds, and those from stringed instruments, which do not inspire him with horror."

The feeling of awe is here sustained with consummate art. The miserable hypochondriac admits that he is enchained by superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and whence, for many years, he has never ventured forth—in regard to an influence "which the *physique* of the grey walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, has, at length, brought about upon the *morale* of his existence."

But the heavy weight of his despair is rendered more deadly and oppressive by the evidently approaching dissolution of a tenderly-beloved sister, his sole companion for long years, his last and only relative on earth. "Her decease," he says bitterly, "will leave me (me the hopeless and the frail) the last of the ancient race of the Ushers." While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so she was called) passed slowly through a remote portion of the apartment, and, without having noticed the appearance

of the visitor, disappeared. "And I learned that the glimpse I had obtained of her person would thus be the last I should obtain—that the lady, at least while living, would be seen by me no more."

They spend several days in painting and reading together, and Usher pours forth his sorrows from time to time in wild improvisations of song, accompanying the words with the music of his guitar. The simplicity and nakedness of the designs of his paintings are described, and they impress the mind with a sentiment of additional awe. One of his songs is given, a weird and melancholy allegory, which displays his mournful consciousness of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne. It is *The Haunted Palace*,—a poem well known to the readers of Poe. They study exclusively books of magic and old romance, and thus the mind of the narrator is gradually infected with the malady of his friend. Suddenly it is announced that the lady Madeline is no more, and her brother states his intention of preserving the corpse for a fortnight (previous to its final interment), in one of the numerous vaults within the main walls of the building. The entombment is performed with the strictest secrecy by the two friends at midnight; and the ceremony in the vault is told with a power that chills the blood. "The disease which had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly cataleptical

character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death." They replace and screw down the lid of the coffin, and, having secured the door of iron, make their way, with toil, into the scarcely less gloomy apartments of the upper portion of the house.

What follows is so magnificent that I would not dare to mutilate it. . . . To those who have not yet read the story, let me recommend solitude and midnight as the most favourable accessories to its perusal. Yet they who know the story will not soon forget the description of the storm rolling in luminous wreaths around the solitary House, the shuddering horror of Roderick Usher, the thrilling effect of the passages from the *Mad Trist* of Sir Launcelot Canning, the shriek ringing through the building, the crash of the brazen shield, falling upon the silver floor with a mighty great and terrible ringing sound. Nor will they forget the impassioned utterance of Usher in the agony of his terror, the sound of the footstep upon the stairs, the rolling back of the huge antique panels of the door, and the apparition of the lady Madeline, in her shroud, with blood upon the white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. Nor will they think without a passing shudder of the reeling and trembling figure falling with a low moaning cry upon the

person of her brother, and the now final death-agonies, which bore him to the floor a corpse and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated : then the frenzied flight of the living man ; the wild light that shot suddenly across his path ; the light of the blood-red moon streaming in upon the fissure of the walls, which extended from the roof to the base ; the rapid widening of the fissure ; the power of the fierce breath of the whirlwind ; the rushing asunder of the mighty walls ; the long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters ; and the deep and dark tarn closing sullenly and silently over the fragments of the House of Usher.

A brief notice is all I can afford of the other tales. An able critic has remarked that Poe's fictions seem to resolve themselves for the most part into two classes : " One, where a series of facts woven mysteriously out of some unknown premises are brought apparently to a logical result ; the other, where the author deals strictly with a single event ; where there is little or no preliminary matter, but the reader is at once hurried into a species of catastrophe, or conclusion of the most exciting character."<sup>1</sup> Adopting this classification, which, for its justness and conciseness could hardly be surpassed, let us refer the several stories to their respective divisions. To the first belong *The Golden-Bug*, an ingenious account of the discovery of Captain

<sup>1</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. cvii.—ED.

Kyd's hidden treasures; *The Murders of the Rue Morgue*, which excited a sensation in Paris, and gave rise to a brisk discussion between two Parisian journals, *La Quotidienne* and *La Commerce*; *The Purloined Letter*, which exhibits much ingenuity and cunning quite worthy indeed of a Fouché; *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, in which the author, under pretence of relating the fate of a Parisian grisette, has followed in minute detail the essential facts of a murder committed in the vicinity of New York. The sagacity of Poe in his hypothetical conclusions was long afterwards confirmed in full by the testimony of two persons implicated in the murder. To the second division may be referred the story we have just analyzed; *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar*; *The Descent into the Maelström*; *The Pit and the Pendulum*; and, indeed, almost all the other tales. But there are three stories which are referable to neither class,—*William Wilson*, *The Domain of Arnheim*, and *Landor's Cottage*. The first is curious and valuable, as William Wilson is manifestly intended as a personification of Poe's own conscience. William Wilson, a person resembling himself in every lineament, haunts him whenever he has done, or is about to do, a criminal action. Tortured at last into fury and desperation, he murders his good genius, and the story ends in these thrilling words:—

“Not a thread in all his raiment, not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments of his face, which was not,

even in the most absolute identity, mine own. It was Wilson ; but he spoke no longer in a whisper, and I could have fancied that I myself was speaking while he said—‘ You have conquered, and I yield. Yet, henceforward art thou also dead, —dead to the World, to Heaven, and to Hope. In me didst thou exist, and in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself.’ ”

*The Domain of Arnheim* and *Landor's Cottage* are highly idealized landscape-pictures, and contrast with one another ; the first being an illustration of the sublimity of grandeur, the second of the sublimity of simplicity.

With regard to the so-styled humorous pieces I have but one remark to make, and that is, that, if there be humour in them, the humour is bad, because it is invariably associated with something so distorted as to be revolting.

On the whole, the tales are more morbid than the poems, and I believe few readers will close the volume without a feeling of relief. They are, in general, more like the recollections of an opium-eater's dreams than the deliberate compositions of a vigorous mind in a naturally healthy condition.

Such were the life and character, and, by a natural consequence, such was the mind, of Edgar Allan Poe. A life of demoniac dissipation, interrupted by hysterical laughter and hysterical tears ; the laughter of one who is not happy, the tears of one whose repentance is not deep ; the remorse of the drunkard awaking in the cold midnight from his

awful stupor, and realizing his position with a shudder more terrible than nightmare,—relapsing again into his direful slumbers, in which conscience sleeps not, but does not wake, and the waste wilderness of thought, “haunted by ill angels only,” is an impalpable horror, a hideous phantasmagoria—

“Bottomless vales and boundless floods,  
And chasms and caves and Titan woods,  
With forms that no man can discover  
For the dews that drip all over ;  
Mountains toppling evermore  
Into seas without a shore.”

Now the dreams are beautiful, ethereal ; but the loveliest images soon relapse into distortion,

“And round about his home the glory  
That blushed and bloomed,  
Is but a dim-remembered story  
Of the old time entombed.”

That the morbidness of this man’s mind was the result of his frightful life, is but too evident ; for his earlier poems, except when he manifestly mimics Byron, exhibit much of the health and vigour of youth. Yet we can take but a one-sided view of a man’s character, after all. The secret sorrow and the incommunicable anguish must be for ever hidden from us. Therefore we dare not judge too harshly. No man can sound the depths of the soul of his dearest friend, much less of one who is almost a stranger ; and there is, and ever can be, but One true Critic in the universe.

## LA GERUSALEMME LIBERATA.

THE Crusades were the sudden waking of the sleeper, full of the vigour and the freshness of the morning, with the light of dreams still lingering about his eyes, and a heart ready to grapple with the monstrous and the unknown . . . Although fanaticism is to be pitied and to be deplored, there [was] something gigantic in [the] enthusiasm, however blind, and however terrible in its consequences. Peter the Hermit was as much a visionary and an enthusiast as Savonarola or Edward Irving. But there is something touching as well as grand in the picture of a poor barefooted monk, going from land to land with the story of his Master's desecrated tomb, and kindling with his rude eloquence princes and peasants, the warrior and the craftsman, and even women and tender boys.

The practical gains of the Crusaders may be estimated at almost nothing. Their scanty con-



quests in Syria had to be abandoned almost as soon as they were attained, and Europe was wasted and impoverished by the fearful drain of wealth and population. On the other hand, this union of the nations in one cause is a magnificent object of contemplation; and it was [much] to throw open the gates of the East, even in the rude shock of invasion and conquest. [The Crusades] were not only a most singular phenomenon in history; they may be looked upon as a vast epic, with all the passions and incidents of an *Iliad* or an *Æneid*. . . Such a subject only required a great poet, and it has found one in Tasso.

There is something Homeric in the grandeur of the *Jerusalem Delivered*, and something more than Homeric in its loveliness. Achilles and Hector and Ulysses are mighty phantoms. They are not only miracles of manhood, but "female grace" is "fused" with their manhood: Achilles weeps for Patroclus; Hector doffs his blazoned helmet and kisses the little Astyanax. But the heroes of the Crusades—Godfrey, Tancred, Rinaldo—more than realize the ideal of the ancient epic. Their passionate devotion to the Cross is blended with all that is beautiful and tender in chivalry. . . . It is herein that the poet is greater than the historian. History without poetry would be a museum of dead bones. The chronicles of the Crusades, had Tasso never lived, would have remained

*LA GERUSALEMME LIBERATA.* 253

merely chronicles. But at the magic touch of the Poet's wand the dead bones have assumed flesh and blood, and forms of beauty and majesty go forth robed in imperial purple.

## THE STUDY OF POETRY.

THE most obvious and the most trite of the advantages of the study of poetry is the intellectual pleasure which may be derived from it. Whether intellectual pleasure be more or less *keen and thrilling* than sensual pleasure, I do not know. Let any one who knows what it is to be really thirsty answer the question for himself, whether a draught of clear cold water has or has not afforded him more intense pleasure, at such moments, than the solution of the most interesting problem, or the construction of the most elegant Greek lyric, or the reading of the most exquisite fiction, could possibly afford under the most favourable circumstances. But we may rest assured that, as the intellect of man is an infinitely higher possession than the sensation of the beast that perishes, so likewise are the pleasures of the intellect nobler and purer than the pleasures of sense. And among the pleasures of the intellect, those derived from the study of poetry are accessible to all . . . To the most dull and mechanical mind certain inci-

dents will at some time or other recall a buried emotion or awaken a slumbering memory. The coarsest clown in the gallery of the theatre will assuredly be more or less affected by the incidents that take place upon the stage. The most matter-of-fact of British tradesmen will be touched in his own peculiar fashion by a stray waft of pathetic melody from the lyre of David. . . . Every reader of poetry knows best his own incommunicable delights ; every reader of poetry knows best himself the characters, the incidents, the feelings, the fairy structures, and the landscapes, in the ideal world, that he [must] love.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the human heart there is, and always has been, a deep craving and yearning for poetry. In the darkest ages of barbarism we find it as strong as in the most polished eras of civilization. This longing after the ideal, the impalpable, the spiritual, is in itself a proof of our capability of rising to a higher state [of nature]. Fretting against the shackles of the actual present, the soul seeks consolation from an ideal past or an ideal future. Little difference does it make whether the ideal be high or low, provided only that it is better than the realities of the hour. We see here the origin of the mythologies—golden visions of a remote past, ethereal dreams of a possible future. The noblest



object that poetry can aspire to is to direct mind to something greater than it experiences life,—to throw even the faintest glimmer upon path that leads to true happiness.

## THE SUBJECTIVE ESSAY.

THE subjective essay will always be attractive if artistically handled. But there is certainly a danger lest the writer may lapse into the egotistical or the sentimental. And sentimentalism is sure to be revolting to a fine sensibility ; nor less so to the most hard-grained honesty, because it is only another name for self-glorifying falsehood : and egotism is sure to be offensive in anyone except an aged person, or a man of established genius. Yet, knowing these faults, it is surely not impossible to steer clear of them. The subjective essay is a sort of poem, or rather a novelet on the minutest scale, necessarily demanding an exquisite finish. Why have we not more of them in the present day? You, gentle sir, whose best qualities are known only to your nearest friends ; you, who, in spite of your modesty and your inexorable common-sense, are half a poet ; you, who have known sorrowing and rejoicing, and watched the sorrows and the joys of others ; why will you impale yourself upon the horns of metaphysical dilemma, or flounder about disconsolate in the shallows of political vaticination?

There are plenty of people competent and willing to perform these feats to the bedazzlement of an enraptured public. But you!—you know as well as your readers that you don't care sixpence about the whole matter. Nay, rather tell us of the strange things you have noted in the city's lanes and highways; tell us of the cool salt breeze and "the heathery bloom of the headland" that you love; of the fisherman's cottage in the recess of the crag-bound inlet; or the merry laughter you heard last harvest in the yellow autumn fields; and, most of all, tell us of your own heart, with its delicate vibrations of hope and fear, such as are rarely felt by us who "grind among the iron facts of life." Be assured this is *your* appointed portion; not the imaginary settling of the destinies of nations, or the balancing of evidence in the philosopher's infinitesimal scales.

## THE LITERATURE OF IRELAND.

LET those who will, blind themselves to the fact. Our country is rising in position and in importance day by day; the dawn of a new era is slowly and surely making itself felt, though its sun be indeed veiled in curtains of mist and draperies of cloud. May we not look forward to a time when the storm of party strife will be hushed away to a dying murmur, and when men of all shades of opinion will consecrate their labour to a common good? Unanimity [is] the cradle of national prosperity.

Those who remember our country twenty years ago, testify that it has not stood still, that it has advanced and is advancing in a steady march of improvement. Our commerce is bettered; our manufactures are increasing; our agriculture has made marked progress. Our industry is winning us national wealth; and among our merchant-princes there are not wanting those who hold it a noble privilege to consecrate their earnings to the welfare of the land.

But these blessings, great as they are, do not



alone constitute the prosperity of a nation. There is something which is less perishable than monument or city, which is more durable than wealth,—ay, than dominion over land and sea ; a light that lingers about the memory of mighty peoples after their sun has sunk for ever. It is a national literature—*monumentum ære perennius*.

All honour to the names of Burke and Goldsmith and Moore ! All honour to those of the past and of the present who have laboured to build for their native land the only human fabric which is indeed indestructible, and by which alone the grandeur and breadth of a nation is measured by remote posterity ! Yet it would be vainglorious to deny that the national literature of Ireland is but stunted and dwarfed in comparison with those of other countries. What have we to compare, after all, with the intellectual produce of England or of Scotland during the last hundred years ? We must not be content with what we possess. We cannot afford to indulge overmuch in the easy rhetoric of self-gratulation. A mighty enterprise lies before us ; and it is for every man of literary abilities—however small, however feeble, he may know them to be—to reflect that the talent entrusted to him, if it be used at all, must be used either to the honour or the dishonour of his country. Without presuming, in youth's frenzy of immodesty, to rival or even to [dream of approaching] the great names of our

literature, it is plainly the duty of every one of us to bear in mind, that in cultivating the art of literary composition we are acquiring, in a greater or less degree, the power of contributing to literature ; although we may never advance beyond respectable sermons, sagacious newspaper-articles, or readable papers in the magazines. Only let us be in earnest. Only let us at once utterly deny all mere trifling and luxurious dallying ; nor worship intellect in its isolation, while we refuse to keep before our eyes what is far higher and more noble than specious ingenuity.

## ORIGINALITY.

EVERY thinker has his own ways of thinking, and imitation is sure of failure, because in the very nature of things it is an impossibility for one man to be the facsimile of another. Try to be Shakespeare, and you will appear smaller than yourself. He who copies an original writer for the sake of being original, will only succeed in sacrificing his own individuality. He who is content to speak out his own thoughts in his own natural manner cannot fail to be original, in the degree in which he differs essentially from other men ; which is the only legitimate measure of originality.

## NOVEL-READING.

MANY people will recollect the time when they were emerging from the enchanted twilight regions of *The Arabian Nights*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *Jack the Giant-Killer*, and were just met, for the first time, by the chill atmosphere of real life—in other words, Latin Grammar and the Rule-of-Three. At that interesting but unhappy period the imagination famishes for want of its accustomed food, and, so surely as it is debarred from wholesome fiction, it will sate its hunger with garbage. Making due allowance for the frailty of humanity, is it not quite possible that much of the schoolboy's prurient curiosity respecting those things which should be known, but which should not become too familiar to the mind, is traceable in some measure to the fact that the imagination, instead of being delicately cultured, is permitted to run wild? If a judicious selection of fiction were made part of the study, not of the boy merely, but of the class, it would keep the imagination occupied, and certainly at least contribute to confine in their proper place those

thoughts and feelings which constitute the special danger of the schoolboy.

But, instead of this, we all know what happens. Woe to the schoolboy who is high-spirited and adventurous, unless he can realize his mother's solicitude for him ! Woe indeed to all schoolboys, saving and excepting those happy few, who, being totally devoid of sensibility or imagination, prefer the multiplication-table to Captain Marryat ; and those very miserable few whose imagination has been stifled by the hot air of the tract-repository or the conventicle !

There are a thousand chances to one that just because novels are the preserves of his parents or his grown-up sisters, an imaginative schoolboy will poach on the said preserves. If he be caught, he may possibly be flogged, or he may possibly be lectured : he will hardly escape a pathetic allusion to the celebrated career of the boy who stole the hornbook, and ended his days upon the gallows.

But, not to waste time in moralizing on the immorality of clandestine novel-reading, let us proceed with the career of our imaginative schoolboy. Watch him at school. He grows absent and pre-occupied, while tops and marbles and the amenities of the play-ground become to him weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable. He becomes self-conscious and uneasy. In a few years, trembling on the verge of hobbledehoyhood, and beginning to disport in

the magnificence of coat-tails, the boy has become a sentimentalist. Now, in the name of all that is beautiful and true, is there any more miserable, more pitiable, or more contemptible spectacle in the world than a sentimental boy? A sentimental young gentleman is a sad sight; a sentimental young lady is dangerous; sentimental dowagers and sentimental old maids are frightful (except in the mild eyes of milk-and-water parsons); but a *sentimental boy* I hold to be intolerable.

Be it observed that I do not imagine that the novels of Marryat, Captain Mayne Reid, or even some of the novels of Kingsley, will make a boy *sentimental*. Far otherwise. The abuse of these novels is of a very different nature. I have no doubt that they make a boy manly and independent. But I think if we could find out how many boys they have made sailors and soldiers and adventurers, the number would astonish us. The case that I have selected—unhappily, to my certain knowledge, a very common one—is that of the boy who subscribes sixpence a-week to a circulating library, and, with a preternatural intellectual deglutition, swallows down all its contents without digesting any of them. Unless he is gifted with a memory like that of Sir Walter Scott, he has probably spoiled his powers of acquisition for life, and doomed himself to a habit of dreamy vacuity very closely bordering upon imbecility. For *his* disease

there is no cure except hard struggling in the arena of life.

That very lamentable habit of mind known as sentimentalism, takes a great many different phases, some of which may be traced to early surfeiting on novels. There are some men who are constitutionally sentimental. Of these I say nothing. Then there is the religious sentimentalist, concerning whom it would be bad taste to say much, and of whom, therefore, I shall merely observe that Mr. Chadband, in Dickens's *Bleak House*, the gentleman who affected widows' houses and buttered-toast, while he eschewed grammar and common-sense, is a not unfavourable specimen of the class. Then there is the sentimentalist of society—the representative man of this class being the young ensign who aspires desperately to a moustache, who talks pathetically of “deuced fine girls,” and kindles into mild seraphic raptures about waltzing and champagne, and other delectable and profitable entertainments. There are other varieties of sentimentalism to be found in a day's walk, but with these I have nothing to do. The sentimentalism produced by injudicious novel-reading is of a different character. Its most tangible effects are to be found in the corners of country newspapers, headed “Select Poetry,” and in the waste-paper baskets of the editors of magazines. It consists much in a highly dramatic faculty of identifying oneself altogether with a favourite

hero or heroine, during the period occupied by the perusal of a novel.

Is it not a pity that the omnivorous *heluo librorum* of either sex is so often like the African queen, who was fattened upon milk-diet to such an extent that she passed her life in a chronic doze?

The ordinary run of conversation about novels illustrates the superficial manner in which they are mostly read. Let the scene be a drawing-room in the country, and the time an evening in winter. *Enter* a group of ladies from the dining-room. They discuss, with charming brevity and exquisite absence of consecutive thought, the coldness of the weather, their several ailments,<sup>1</sup> and their absent acquaintances, and at last settle down upon the gentlemen in the dining-room. In the midst of the discussion, *enter* the gentlemen from their wine. There is a suppressed titter among the younger ladies, followed by a frigid and uneasy silence. Mr. Blindworm, an Honour Man from college, makes instinctively for a table, takes up a "Peerage," looks at the cover through his spectacles, and lays it down. He feels a dim consciousness that all eyes in the room are upon him, and his hands fidget nervously in search of trousers-pockets. Morbidly sensible of the necessity of doing something with his hands, he seizes the "Peerage" once more, in

<sup>1</sup> Thackeray's testimony on this interesting theme is well known.—ED.



the agony of desperation, and buries himself with terrific resolution in the title-page. He is rescued by Miss Amelia Melville, a lady of studious ringlets and languid literary sympathies. She asks him if he has read *Ravenshoe*, daintily fingering a volume of the same with Mudie's label on the cover. He looks up benignly, and answers "no," with a general intimation that he never reads novels; after which he looks very much relieved. "Ah, I suppose you prefer poetry," says the lady, half inquiringly, half apologetically. (She keeps an album, and is known to be the authoress of those tender lines on the first page, signed "Amelia M.," and entitled *On Seeing a Boy Catch a Butterfly*, and beginning—

"O, set the pretty insect free!  
See how it quivers with alarm!  
Ah cruel boy, I'm sure to thee  
Its life and beauty wrought no harm!")

But, before Mr. Blindworm has time to answer whether he likes poetry or not, a lady in spectacles, with transfixing orbs of green, severely beautiful, asks the company in general if they have read *Lost and Saved*. Whereupon ensues a fusillade of blank cartridge from the company in general—"O, what a beautiful novel it is!"—"Rather immoral, I think: do n't *you*, Mr. Greenhorn?"—"Why, no, Lady Minerva, she calls a spade a spade."—"Poor Beatrice!"—"And what a horrid woman the Marchioness is!"—"I do n't think ladies can write good

novels!"—"Very ungallant of you, Mr. Blindworm!"—"My favourite novelist is Bulwer Lytton."—"Mine is Dickens!"—"Really!"—"I think none of them comes up to Thackeray."—"O, the horrid man! so frightfully satirical to the ladies!"—until, haply, some mild-minded melancholy maiden-aunt interposes, and throws into the midst the mutilated corpse of somebody's character, which all begin busily and eagerly to dissect, as if moral anatomy were the proper calling of each.

I have spoken of sentimental young gentlemen. I would now conclude with a word on sentimental young ladies. When I said above that they were dangerous, I merely alluded to the romantic and inexperienced. Burns expresses it in one of his lyrics—

"O leave novels, ye Mauchline belles,  
Ye're safer at your spinning wheel;  
Such witching books are baited hooks  
For rakish rooks, like Rob Mossziel."

Ever since Francesca of Rimini read the story of Lancelot with her lover, novel-reading young ladies have been acknowledged inflammatory. No doubt of it, a little dash of sentimentalism is attractive to unpractised eyes, except when it develops into stiff curls and a partiality for poodles.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE WEIRD LADY.

\* \* \* \* \*

ON the night before the foreign lady was found lying dead upon the door-steps in — Square, I happened to be at a crowded ball in another part of the city. I left the house at two o'clock in the morning, fatigued and heated ; and a friend, whose name I need not mention, accompanied me to the corner of — Street. Here we separated, as our destinations lay in opposite quarters. We had been chatting in a frivolous manner about the "sensation novels" and the "sensation dramas" of the day, and our conversation, if such it might be called, naturally enough drifted to stories of the marvellous and unaccountable—those strange mysterious stories at which we laugh in the broad daylight, but which curdle the blood of the most fearless when told in the darkness ; more especially at that witching hour when the dank wind of the dawn moans in the chilling gloom, and the thin unreal light imparts to every object a weird

and ghastly hue, and converts into shapes of horror the most ordinary appearances that meet the eye. Just as we were bidding each other good-night, my friend suddenly exclaimed—"By the bye, what way do you go?"

"Through — Square," I answered, "and so on to the barracks where our *depôt* is stationed."

"Do not go through the Square, I recommend you strongly," he said, "after what we have been speaking about. I was talking to a man this morning who saw the Weird Lady there last night."

"Tush!" I replied. "Do you take me for a child, to be frightened half-a-mile out of my way at this hour of the night by a nurse's tale?"

"Then you have heard of the Weird Lady, of course?" he asked, in a careless voice.

"Of course I have," I answered. "Good-night." And so, with a jest, we parted.

Now, although I had disarmed the ridicule of my friend with a sufficiently plausible white lie, there was something in his words that frightened me out of my wits, in spite of myself. The Weird Lady!—What was she? Was she a ghost, an apparition, or some unfortunate woman wailing for her demon lover? Or was it a mere invention made on the spur of the moment to terrify me? Most likely; nay, surely so—and yet, the Weird Lady! My God, what a horrible combination of words to hear uttered for the first time in the dead of night,

in the midst of those silent, dead, deserted streets—the body wearied out, the nerves wakened to preternatural acuteness of sensation, and the imagination heated to a flame with ghost-stories! And then this *thing*, whatever it was, this Weird Lady, was most probably to cross my path in the very way that, come what would, I had determined to go—Pshaw! it was but a trick to try my courage. I would endeavour to think of something else.

So I thought of the fair girl who had been my partner in the waltz, and my companion at the supper-table. I thought of her golden hair, her melting eyes, her sparkling repartees and her clever and really sensible remarks; I went over them all in my mind—ay, down to the very ring on her finger, and the fairy turn of her delicate foot. But when I had dwelt on all these for some time, my mind recurred to the words I had last heard, the words of indefinite horror which went ringing and tolling in my ears, like the heavy notes of a death-bell heard afar off beneath the canopy of night—such a sound as I have listened to in my bed with agonizing terror, swelling and falling on the night-wind, from the solitary tower of an Italian convent. The full horror of the sensation came down upon me suddenly. And then—a wild, weird, piercing wail—neither a shriek nor a song—breaking through the silence, not six yards from where I walked—sent the blood coursing like an icy stream through every

vein in my body. I had reached — Square before I knew it.

There it was, standing, I thought, close up to the area-railings of a high and gloomy house—a tall, majestic figure, robed from head to foot in deepest black, with a veil of thick crape drawn over the face. As I drew near, she paused in her weird chant, and I thought the sound of my footsteps on the flags had startled her; yet she neither moved away, nor looked round, but stood silent and motionless, leaning against the railings, with her veiled face turned upward towards the windows of the house. In sudden surprise I stopped. . . . A cold wind, the forerunner of rain and tempest, swept shuddering through the autumnal branches in the Square, and then there was silence, and I heard her moaning low—a deep, pitiful moan that made my blood curdle, and my limbs grow chill. Then she burst forth once more in a passionate wail of music, with a voice that quavered as she sang. After awhile one of the upper windows of the gloomy house was suddenly opened, and she ceased; and I heard the rough voice of a man from above curse her, and tell her to be-gone. She started, with a shrill scream; the window was drawn down violently; and she stretched out her arms, and cried, “Gasparo, Gasparo, Gasparo, may God forgive you!” Then she tottered back, and fell heavily at the foot of the steps.

. \* \* \* \*

No one but myself could trace any connection between the history of the poor lady and the Italian. No one but myself saw any meaning in the cross of cornelian, the tress of raven hair, and the blanched leaflets of the faded rose. I had a strange suspicion of the true meaning of this thrilling combination of circumstances ; and acting upon an impulse, as is usual with me, I went to the lunatic-asylum yesterday, and obtained an interview with Signor Rinaldi, through the kindness of Dr. Melrose, with whom I have been long acquainted. The Italian lay writhing upon a couch in his cell, bound hand and foot, and raving incoherently in the sweet language of his country, which seemed strangely out of place in the utterances of the maniac. I have lived in Italy for years, so that I understand and speak the language. I addressed him, but he did not notice me. I then repeated a line of the wild song I had heard the preceding night, and for a moment his consciousness seemed to return ; but immediately again he began to rave as before. However, from his ravings I collected the clue to the whole story.

\* \* \* \* \*

O, what a world of sorrow and madness, hopes nourished during the day to be dashed to pieces ere the night passed over, weary wanderings, and untold, unspeakable despair, that poor woman must have known ! She is gone to her rest at last ; and God is pitiful and good.

It is not my intention to moralize. I am a man of fashion, and unaccustomed to writing. I give the story, plainly and simply, as I only can ; and perhaps some novelist or poet may treat it as it should be handled.

\* \* \* \* \*



## A PROPHECY.

THE sun was sinking towards the horizon of a vast plain, on the eastern seaboard of which stands a city which is called Dublin. The western heaven was clothed in all the rich and gorgeous colouring of the forest in mid-autumn, when the leaves are tinged with ruddy gold and the night of winter is at hand. The large ball which surmounts the ancient spire of St. Patrick's Cathedral might be seen glittering, beacon-like, in the old city, from the hills and mountains afar off; even as the lance and helm of Athena Promachus were descried of yore by hind and mariner from the groves and waves that gird the most celebrated of cities. The mountain-heads were glancing in the sunbeams, and the plate-glass windows of the magnificent shooting-lodge on the summit of Mount-Pelier glistened like a coronet of diamonds upon the regal hill-top. All was calm in the suburban meadows, and no sound was to be heard save the lowing of the kine, and the buzzing of the summer flies.

Two travellers, in "middle age forlorn," sauntered slowly along a lonely road from the mountains

towards the city. The elder was about the middle height. . . . [The fiery glow upon his face indicated the fervour of] the poetic furnace within. This singular-looking personage wore a "swallow-tail" coat of fine black cloth, the double-breast of which was tightly braced and buttoned about his body, and the hinder part whereof "stuck out promontorially from his nether continent," the pockets being crammed and rammed with books and writing-materials. (This coat, it is only just to state, had not yet been paid for. It was obtained by interest, without purchase, in the following manner:—A pedlar in England essayed to purloin a sagacious dog, named Heautontimoroumenos, belonging to our travellers. The dog followed the pedlar for a little space, the latter alluring him with a piece of bread, which he unfortunately secreted in the pocket of a fine black cloth coat in his pack, in order to reserve it for his luncheon. Heautontimoroumenos, however, while the pedlar was sitting to rest, made off with coat and all, and brought the prize in safety to his masters. The elder claimed the coat, and, after a severe tussle with the younger, in which his own old garment was torn to tatters, succeeded in securing it for his own.) About his neck was twined a handkerchief, *over* his shirt-collar, but under his beard—colour, claret, *vice* mauve superseded. A Brobdingnagian gold pin, *minus* the precious stone (which had been appropriated to pecuniary purposes),

decorated his scarf. A waistcoat of rusty black satin ; pantaloons of threadbare sable, in which an imaginative person could not fail to behold his visage reflected, so glossy had they become through age and grease ; and, lastly, a pair of unpolished top-boots, worn over the pantaloons ; completed the apparel of the elder traveller.—*Erratum*. His hat was brushed with scrupulous neatness—(evidently by the friction of the sleeve moistened with saliva); yet a keen-eyed observer might descry the block through vistas which occurred at intervals in the nap.

The younger traveller, wore upon his feet a pair of Blucher-boots, “through which the sunlight poured ;” trousers of napless frieze ; Inverness-wrapper (out of fashion for twenty years) ; waistcoat of green baize, from the torn button-hole of which depended a long rusted iron curb-chain, to the end of which was attached a photographic portrait of the owner and wearer. This fantastic trinket was on week-days permitted to hang loose, on principle ; but on Sundays, and other feasts and fasts of the Anglican Church, it was entrusted by the hands of the original to the inmost cloisters of the green baize waistcoat-pocket. He wore no coat underneath the “Inverness,” which was provided with under-sleeves of pea-green baize. In his hand he held a small wand of olive-wood, on which was cut in large letters, “Boboli, 1874,” and upon which our traveller was wont to gaze ever and anon,

murmuring the while, “‘Boboli’s ducal bowers,’ ‘Boboli’s ducal bowers.’” Puritanical shirt-collars of appalling dimensions extended over the shoulders of the “Inverness:” suffice it to state that they were most decidedly not white. Instead of a neck-tie, he wore a large spade-beard [*spado*], the hue of which was neither that of “your straw-coloured beard,” nor “your orange-tawny beard,” nor “your purple-in-grain beard,” nor “your French-crown-coloured beard,” nor “your perfect yellow,” but may rather be described as a blending of the hues of gingerbread and “Day-and-Martin.” His moustache drooped on either side his beard, and resembled the appearance of a worm wreathed about a skull. His eyebrows made a penthouse for his eyes. His unkempt hair was a tangled maze, more inextricable than the labyrinth of Minos; and on the side of his head was poised a black felt “turban-hat” (out of fashion twenty years), ornamented with a red ostrich-plume, which he wore because Mephistopheles in *Faust* is represented as wearing a flame-coloured feather. . . .

“Yea, so: God wot,” exclaimed the elder traveller, “in our time this and the neighbouring region consisted of an assemblage of Liliputian casæ; it was also infested by latrones of villainous aspect, the anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders; and was by the incolæ of the mother-city regarded in the light of a veritable

and undeniable ultima Thule ; which, procul dubio, it was ; and this I certify on oath, ‘per tibicinem qui coram Mose modulatus est,’ νῆ τὸν κύνα, and—quid multa—by the foot of Pharaoh, apud Ben Jonson, in personâ Captain Bobadill, vide *Every Man in His Humour*, and——.”

\* \* \* \* \*


(1860.)



## THE IRISH SPORTING-YOUTH.

HE haunts the stables with as much reverential familiarity as Numa of old the grove of Egeria. He is a linguist of exquisite discernment; though the only languages in which he displays his wonderful powers are horse-talk, and a polite variation of the dialect of his county. His stock of literature is limited enough; but, such as it is, he is admirably versed in it. It consists for the most part of drinking-songs and hunting-songs, with a tolerably fair collection of the halfpenny ballads of the day; but he is also magnificently "made up" in the police intelligence and in the sporting intelligence of the county paper, and he takes *Bell's Life* whenever he can get it. For the rest, his conversational powers are miraculous. He possesses a natural facility, truly admirable, of turning all conversation into his own peculiar channel. He can twist theology into a casting-line of the best flies of the month; politics he can convert into the last run with the hounds; literary fiddle-faddle (a species of conversation to which young ladies in the country are dangerously disposed) he can break off into a cour-

sing-match with Sir Giles Muff, or a day's shooting on Mr. Bluff's preserves, with some convulsing details of an encounter with Mr. Gruff's English gamekeeper. He is a prodigious favourite with the ladies, who consider him "a fine manly fellow," in spite of his sporting slang and sporting anecdotes, which bore the visitors from the city, while they charm the old squires and parsons who sit considerably beyond the legitimate period after dinner, drinking punch or port-wine, and discussing mild politics and local gossip. But to see the sporting-youth in his true element, you must see him out of doors. You must see him on the lonely moor at daybreak, with his setter and his double-barrelled gun, marching majestically through bog-water and puddle, through brake and heather, eager for the winged prey. Then is he "a fine manly fellow" *indeed*.




## YOUTH AND MANHOOD.

**I**F the child be the father of the man, the youth is his chaperon. The youth introduces the man to his career. The principles adopted by the youth impart a tone and colour to the whole future of the man. The character of the man is most clearly read by the light thrown upon it by the character of the youth. The youth commits himself to a political party: the man cannot emancipate himself without incurring the reputation of a turn-coat. The youth embraces a certain form of creed: the man dares not exchange it for fear of being taunted as unstable and heretical. The youth becomes entangled in the meshes of a coterie, social or literary: the man is unwilling to extricate himself at the expense of cutting his friends. So it may be taken as a general axiom in the science of human life, that if the youth pledges himself to any particular course, the man is expected to adhere to the same. There are exceptions, noble and ignoble; but they are rare.



## CAVOUR.

WE have only to examine the political conduct of Count Cavour to be convinced of the nobility of his purpose, the disinterestedness and self-abnegation of his life, and the miraculous sagacity of his far-reaching foresight. Born and brought up among the haughty and bigoted aristocracy of Turin, educated by Jesuits, and for some years the page of King Charles Felix, he was yet strong enough even in his boyhood to shake off once and for ever the thralldom of the worn-out traditions among which he had been [reared.] He spent his youth in the study of the British Constitution, and eagerly and earnestly watched the progress of the reforms which were at that time struggling for existence in the British House of Commons. And when the expression of his liberal views brought upon him persecution and almost banishment, instead of joining the frenzied Mazzinian party—as many another would have done, embittered by the hostility of his caste and by the persecution of his king,—he quietly left Italy, and spent the next seven years of his life in the study of the government and admin-



istration of Switzerland, France, and England. He made it his business to learn England thoroughly, and in England he acquired those principles of freedom and moderation which he afterwards consecrated to the Italy of his dreams.

One magnificent idea animated his laborious years. For the realization of that one idea he lived, and toiled, and waited. No brute force, no underhand plotting, were admitted into his plans for the attainment of his glorious object. He sought to improve the agricultural and commercial condition of his country, before launching it forth into the trying struggle for nationality. He would not suffer the youthful warrior to go forth against such fearful odds till he had first furnished him with armour, and then seen that he had proved it. We know how he provided for the welfare of Piedmont in those years. What were his acts? He founded the agricultural society, announcing in the journal of that society the great ideas which were the object of his life,—the independence of Italy; union between the princes and the people; progress in the path of reform; and a league between the Italian states. We cannot forget the daring statesmanship that first promulged in Italy the watchword of a Free Church in the State. We cannot forget that he formed treaties of commerce with England, with the minor states of Europe, and with France; that the systematic inauguration of the

strategic railway-net was solely owing to him, and the entire reconstruction of the tariff on free-trade principles. And so his bitterest enemies must confess that he laid the foundation of the Kingdom of Italy.

The policy that dictated the disastrous campaign which ended with the defeat of Novara, may be called in question ; but the proposer of the scheme was not Cavour, but Gioberti ; and had Cavour not yielded, the government would have been overwhelmed by the republican faction. The fatal day of Novara produced one good effect, which cannot be denied : it identified the cause of Piedmont with the cause of Italy. " We have got the Italian tricolour as our standard," said Cavour, " instead of the flag of Savoy."

He has been accused of checking the liberty of the press. The fact is, that in 1852 the Piedmontese press was running riot in its newly-acquired liberty, and, to avoid giving offence to foreign governments at that most critical time, it was absolutely inevitable to resort to some gentle restrictive measures.

His reputation as a financier has been likewise impeached ; and that there was an increasing deficit throughout the period of his administration we do not deny. But he played for splendid stakes, and history will record that he did not pay too dearly.

. . . With marvellous labour and perseverance, he gradually moulded out of the roughest and hardest materials a shape of symmetry and beauty. . . The only act of Cavour's which can with any show of reason be questioned was the cession of Savoy and Nice. But there is a great deal to be said on both sides of this question. In the first place, Savoy is geographically French, and had long been coveted by France. Besides, the connection between Savoy and Piedmont was a dynastic, not a national, connection. And from the moment that Sardinia became a constitutional country, all community of feeling between the two states ceased. Besides, in a military point of view, Savoy was useless to Italy. And, whether the universal suffrage was a farce or not, will any one pretend to prove that, had there been a strong national feeling against annexation among the inhabitants of these provinces, that feeling would not have made itself pronounced? Cavour saw, moreover, that France would hold Savoy and Nice as a material guarantee for the maintenance of the Italian Kingdom; she would bind herself by a recognition of the geographical principle of boundaries; and, by acknowledging the principle of popular suffrage, Cavour saw that he had now established a precedent which the Emperor could not refuse to acknowledge when the time came to annex Italian territory to Piedmont. The annexation was an old idea, older than the ministry of Cavour, older than

the empire of Louis Napoleon. It was mooted as a condition by the Republicans in 1848, when the formation of a sub-Alpine kingdom was first dreamt of. It is a mistake to imagine that the idea was first broached at the interview at Plombières.

When we speak of the single stain upon the scutcheon of Cavour, if stain indeed it be, we should remember the purity of his life, and the singleness of his purpose, and the gigantic enterprise which he accomplished, before we pronounce harshly upon this single act, all the circumstances of which we have not seen, and shall not see so long as the Emperor Napoleon lives and rules. When we speak of his few shortcomings, we should in all fairness remember the enormous difficulties with which he had to grapple ; how he had to fight his perilous way in the face of the suspicion of Europe, against the precipitancy and rashness of one section of his countrymen, against the indifference and scepticism of another. If we admit that his feet stumbled once or twice, let us not forget that he bore upon his shoulders the weight of an entire nation. If any one will sincerely question his devotion, let him look at the enormous accumulation of business which he discharged untiringly, unflaggingly, with an unconquerable ardour, an un baffled conviction of the greatness of his cause. Let us remember how, relinquishing his shares, during the Napoleonic war, he discharged in his own person the duties of

four ministerial offices ; and in fact superintended the administration of almost every department of the State. Let us not forget that rather than sign the Treaty of Villafranca he threw up all his offices, and retired to his humble farm at Leri. Let us bear in mind the last sublime and touching scene ; how, when the glorious intellect was wandering, and the noble head lay low, the last words that issued from his lips referred to the treatment of Naples—  
“No state of siege ! No state of siege !”

Will you withhold your approbation from the man who, mainly by his own dauntless energy, made Italy what she is ? Have you any sympathy for a life which was one long struggle of disinterested patriotism ? You do not deny that the sun is bright because astronomers have discovered a few spots upon his disc. Will you then insist upon narrowing your vision to the microscopic scrutiny of a few trivial flaws, the necessary frailties of humanity, and forget the splendour of that noble life, the true heroism of that single-minded career ? We grant that he was not perfect—he was a *man*, and not a demigod. As a genuine and ardent patriot, as an earnest advocate of civil and religious freedom in Piedmont, as the winner of a constitution for his country, as the zealous promoter of education, as the fosterer of law and order, as the establisher of his country's place among the nations, as the founder of Sardinia's military glory, and, lastly, as

the creator of Italy ; as such will history recognize Cavour, and in the unbiassed contemplation of these unselfish deeds will its approval be unqualified as it will be rational.

## NON-INTERVENTION.

THE very fact of allowing the doctrine of non-intervention to merge into a policy, an invariable rule in the administration of foreign affairs, is and must be, from the nature of things, damaging to the prestige of the nation that adopts it. Granted that it may be wise and prudent to abstain from meddling with the affairs of other countries in certain cases ; granted that Lord Palmerston was right in maintaining an attitude of passive indifference in the case of America or of Poland ; this by no means proves that a *policy* of non-intervention is beneficial. If a certain course of action proves serviceable in some cases, it does not follow that it will serve in all.

The doctrine of non-interference is a wise and a good doctrine, based upon the principle of national inviolability, and it is a natural and necessary product of the development of European civilization. But a policy of non-intervention is quite a different thing—a cowardly and selfish policy, which deliberately ignores the eternal principles of right and justice, and worships in the frigid temple of expedi-



ency alone. Allow the general doctrine of non-interference to be fair and judicious ; is it possible to convert the speculative theory into an universal practice without, in certain cases, violating justice ? Politics have been well called " a science of exigencies ;" the exact exigency must be given before the exact rule can be determined. But to reduce the doctrine of non-interference into a policy of non-intervention is to ignore all exigencies ; it is the Christianity of the coward who stands by with folded arms to look upon innocence crushed and weakness trampled under foot, and refuses to strike a blow except in his own defence.

Even Vattel himself acknowledges such wide reservations to his favourite theory as *de facto* to nullify its applicability as a policy, . . .


However just and expedient the doctrine of non-interference may be in general and in the abstract, it is not only inexpedient, but even impossible, for a great power to pursue a policy of non-intervention without endangering its integrity, without compromising its independence, without seriously impairing the splendour of its prestige. . . .

But the capital absurdity of the policy of non-intervention is yet to come. Accepting the doctrine of non-interference in its broadest and most definite sense, must we or must we not be prepared to accept all its consequences ? Supposing it to be once for all acknowledged as a law binding upon all nations that

every country should mind its own affairs and leave other people to mind theirs, are the nations who accept this doctrine bound to compel it to be respected? Are they or are they not? If there be a law, there must be a penalty for its violation. Now, the only penalty which can possibly be affixed to the violation of the law "thou shalt not interfere," is intervention by force of arms. It follows that, although the general doctrine is worthy of our respect, such a thing as a deliberate policy of non-intervention is nothing more or less than an impossibility. Abstain from interference in this case or in that; suffer "an infant civilization" to be strangled in its cradle, or a fratricidal war to rage unchecked; it is a question of prudential consideration, not of justice. But, however you fence round a particular case with extenuations based upon the plea of expediency, the theory of a policy of non-intervention is an absurdity.

A policy of non-intervention! Supposing such a thing to *be* possible, how could it prove beneficial to any country, much less to such a country as England—England, which once was recognized as the stern but impartial judge, the awful but incorruptible arbiter of the destinies of nations? . . . Woe to that country which proclaims as its policy the frigid, the unutterably selfish, line of conduct which will suffer the weak to be insulted and ridden down by the strong, which will suffer the unsullied banners

of liberty and justice to be trodden in the mire beneath the iron tread of tyranny ! Woe above all to England—England, once honoured as the noble-spirited, the lion-hearted, the guardian deity of justice—if she resolve that her avenging sword shall lie in inglorious rust within its scabbard when innocence is being brutally murdered, that sword which once was ever ready to flash forth to teach the tyrant and avenge the wronged ! Woe to England in that day when the feeble and the oppressed shall cease to look to her for sympathy, knowing too well that it would be hopeless to appeal for that assistance without which the parade of sympathy is a cruel mockery and a heartless lie ! At the present day the belief among the nations of the Continent is that England barks, but never bites. Ere long the taunt will be that we bark, but *dare* not bite. But the longer we bark without biting, the more severely we shall be compelled to bite at last. As it is, the discontent and the bitter scorn of Europe are making themselves heard in a loud indignant murmur, which may presage the tempest. The Danish papers say that England has sunk so low that she has lost all feeling of honour, and resents nothing. The feeling of Austria and of Prussia is manifested in the taunt that Great Britain has a government disregarded by the rest of the world. The Italian press, commenting upon the reception of Garibaldi, flings forth the gibe that



England has indeed sympathy for Italy, but not to the extent of spending a single man or a single shilling ; sympathy for Denmark, but no help when she suffers from an unrighteous war.

Without her prestige for nobility of purpose and generosity of action, what would England be ? Her wealth and her strength are as dust in the balance when weighed with her moral influence. It will be an evil day for the world when we suffer the national emblem of our country—Britannia, with her eyes looking earnestly into the future, and the blue waves rippling around her feet—to be superseded by John Bull the obese, with his complacent hands reposing ingloriously in his pockets !

(1864.)

## TRADES' UNIONS.

**I**F the dangers and the atrocities which have been attributed from time to time to Trades' Unions really do exist, and really do spring from the source to which they have been ascribed, we have considerable cause for very serious alarm, inasmuch as Trades' Societies, instead of diminishing in importance, are increasing in number and improving in organization every day. If, on the other hand, it can be proved that these atrocities and these dangers have been magnified and coloured by the imagination of the anti-unionists, the subject is still a subject of importance ; for the movement is a mighty movement ; it is the laudable struggle of a great and powerful class for a corporate existence ; it is the gradual arising, stone upon stone and mass over mass, of the buttresses of a nation's prosperity. For I will venture to believe that there is no one who would not see the working-classes benefited, that there is no one who would not hail the improvement of their condition as an improvement in the nation's welfare, as an amelioration of the condition of every unit in the social mass. Interests

so vast and so wide-spreading are bound up with the destinies of the British workman.

Much rhetorical capital has been made out of the fact of the existence of strikes. Now, I am not going to speak lightly of the evils which really do result from strikes. That evils have resulted and do result from them, I freely admit. But what I do insist upon is, that the magnitude of these evils has been exaggerated; that we have been called upon to look only at this single feature in the picture, and that, too, through a distorting medium, and through the magnifying-glasses of the anti-unionists. The fact is, that *we* never hear of Trades' Unions except when we read in the newspapers the accounts of a strike. But it would be to the last degree unfair to judge of the whole system by these isolated instances of its effects; and I maintain that the strike, far from being an essential object of the Trades' Unions, is nothing but an accident of their history.

For, look for a moment at the objects which *are* proposed and which *are* carried out by these societies. You will find them, elaborately detailed, and supported by the inexorable logic of figures and of facts, in the report of a Committee appointed to inquire into the subject by the Social Science Association of 1860. What, then, I ask, are the objects effected by the Trades' Unions round about us every day? The firm which employs the

working-man has failed, and he is suddenly cast adrift upon the world, with no provision (let us say) for a starving wife and starving children. Well, he has only to apply to his society, and he receives a donation which enables him to live till he obtains employment again. The trade is impoverished in his neighbourhood : he receives tramp-allowance, to help him to proceed to a distant county. Again, he falls sick, and is unable to support himself : his society provides him with medical attendance, and with the comforts and necessities of the sick-room. He breaks a limb, or is otherwise incapacitated for labour : his society sees that he shall be tended and supported till he gets well. When he is too old to work, instead of having to choose between the shame of begging and the shame of the Poor-house, he applies to his society for the superannuation which he has earned by his own voluntary contributions. And when he lies upon the bed of death, and to the pain of mortal sickness is added a harrowing anxiety for the future of his children, he is at least saved the misery of knowing that in order to bury him with decency his widow must starve herself ; and he takes comfort from the assurance that his nearest and his dearest, to whom he has consecrated a life of toil, will *not* be sent forth to famish in the streets, when death has smoothed for ever his care-worn brow.

That is the history of the Trades' Societies in

their relation to the lives of nine out of ten of the working-men who join them. Blot out this history, and substitute the strike in its place as the object of the combinations, and I venture to say that this mighty organization, which (be it observed) includes the best and the most honest workmen of every trade, would dwindle into a knot of ill-conditioned, factious agitators. Whoever will persist in identifying the Trades' Unions with the strikes which happen from time to time, may preach indeed with unction to the ignorant and the listless among the upper-classes, but the working-man will not believe him.

But, after all, *are* strikes to be universally condemned? Are we to identify these movements only with calamity and disaster? I deny it. I maintain that, if the working-man is oppressed, if the capitalists combine to defraud him of the gains which are justly his, the *only* way by which he can obtain the reward of the sweat of his brow is by refusing to work until he gets it. Remember this, that, as Mr. Ludlow states it, "the combination-power of any given establishment represents a power greatly inferior to that of the employer." Remember that the struggle between capital and labour is the war of the unarmed multitude, the blind struggle of a diversity of wills and a scattered variety of purposes against singleness of will and unity of purpose. Remember that the capitalist has the advantages of



superior intellect and superior education, that he has other resources besides his trade, that by a single flash along the telegraph-wires he can combine with other capitalists in an instant ; while the labourers possess not one of these advantages, being inferior in education, as well as solely dependent on their employments, and being totally unable to effect unity of action except by the organization of the Trades' Unions. I insist, therefore, that the strike is their only means of defence against such preponderating influences, and I claim sympathy on the grounds of humanity as well as of reason.

Acts of violence have been laid to the charge of strikes, and I am not going to deny that in certain cases this sole weapon of the working-classes *has* been rashly wielded. But let [those] who seek to terrify us by their rhetorical exaggerations of these evils explain this fact, which they cannot overturn ; let them explain why it is that the excesses laid to the charge of the Trades' Unions invariably diminish both in number and in violence in an inverse ratio to the age of their institution. Why, this very fact itself, if supported by no other, would be sufficient to prove the point at issue,—that Trades' Unions *are* tending to elevate the working-classes, by showing them that violence is not strength, and that unity of purpose is their surest bulwark.

... Remember that the excesses of strikes have

been diminishing day after day; that coercion to join the societies is the exception, not the rule; and that both the one and the other of these is in the inverse ratio of the age of the Trades' Unions.

And then look at the advantages. The permanent existence of any Trade society necessarily implies that it comprises the best men in the trade. That they do so in fact, is proved by the statistics of the societies. They improve the morals of the men by teaching them to depend upon themselves, and to have faith in each other in the honest and praiseworthy effort to elevate their class. Far from being the furnaces of agitation which they have been represented, they are the Benefit Societies of the working-man, they are the poor man's banker, his bulwark and his strong defence. The coöperative societies—witness those of Leeds and Rochdale—are their result and their natural offspring, and none can deny that these are raising the working-classes to that independence and that self-reliance which are the essentials of success in every walk of life. Lastly, the Trades' Unions are the only defence which has yet been discovered for labour in its inevitable struggle against capital.

What would become of the workman if the Trades' Unions were destroyed? Naked and defenceless on every side, distrustful of his fellow-workmen, distrustful even of his own self, without a voice to protest against injustice, without a voice even to

demand his rights, ground down, isolated, crushed, he is absolutely at the mercy of his capitalist master, and is in very deed a slave. Woe to him if he succumb to the crushing force of his destiny ; woe to him if his health fail him ; if he be thrown out of employment ; if the wages he so hardly earns will not supply him with the scanty means of life. He is tossed to and fro between the Scylla of destitution and the Charybdis of parish-relief. The bitter, cruel storm has come down upon him, and in vain will he look for a haven of refuge along the weary foam. Homeless, disheartened, spiritless, will you marvel if he rebels against his fate, will you cry out in pious horror if he resorts to brutal violence, or besots himself in the wretched hope to drown the miseries that poison his very soul ? Is he *not* a slave, a very slave, in everything but the name ? Belonging to no corporate body, acknowledging no fellowship, ridden down by the wealthy and the strong, he will slowly and surely fall lower and lower, demoralized as a slave, and finally as a slave brutalized ; he, without whom our national prosperity were but the shadow of a shadow ; the British workman, to whom we owe a debt so deep and so undying that we should avenge the harm done to a single hair of his honest head.

## NON-SECTARIAN EDUCATION.

THE question is not whether a government professing the true religion should make that religion an element of public instruction ; but whether any government, be that government Mohammedan, Jewish, Greek, Protestant, Catholic, or Atheistic, should make the terms of national education to be the acceptance of instruction in the religion of the State. The question is not whether the *British* government should propagate the principles of British Protestantism, by making religious instruction the condition of secular education ; but whether government in the abstract (not any particular government) is justified in withholding instruction in the commonest arts of life unless the individual has first embraced the religious tenets of his rulers. Suppose that this country had the misfortune to be governed by the Sultan of Turkey ; suppose that a large portion of the population consisted of Christians, and that the religion of the remaining portion was Mohammedan ; would it be fair, would it be rational, would it be even in the least degree practicable, to deprive the child of a

Christian artisan of the knowledge of spelling and accounts, unless the parents should first consent to allow him to be initiated in the mysteries of the Prophet? And yet not a whit less unjust, not a whit less unjustifiable, is the mistaken zeal which would deprive the child of the Dissenter, or the child of the Roman Catholic, of the scanty pittance of education which is doled out to the child of the man who is willing to huxter his principles and barter his convictions for expediency.

Again, is it to be expected by the most romantic of denominational Utopians that a religion which is forced will ever produce honest and rational conviction? In the interests of common-sense, I hope not. In the interests of common humanity I would hope that the supporters of the system do n't understand what they talk about, when they thus advocate proselytism as the condition of acquiring the alphabet and the rule-of-three at the rate of a penny a-week! The system they advocate is nothing else than the purest and most undiluted proselytism. Let them open their eyes, and look at the matter honestly and fairly. Here is a barefooted, ragged child in the wilds of Connemara, who is, to all intents and purposes, an eyesore to civilization, an useless incumbrance to the exchequer of the country. Yet this miserable urchin is to remain in ignorance of the geographical position of Dublin, and of the commonest rudiments of arithmetic and writing; he is

to grow up a reprobate, an outcast, and a barbarian ; unless his parents will sell their convictions, and consent to see, according to their own firm belief, his soul utterly destroyed and lost in order that his body may be fed and clothed. Is this humanity ? Is this enlightened philanthropy ?

Cruel and unjust and inhuman as such a system is in theory, it is not only inhuman, unjust, and cruel in practice, but it is ineffectual and absurd. Would any meek-minded philanthropic theorist attempt to apply the system to India ? Mr. Gladstone was too logical a thinker to push his romantic orthodoxy so far as this ; and he deliberately invented a treaty to escape the consequences. Everybody is no doubt familiar with Lord Macaulay's exposure of his fallacies. Try the system upon India for one week, and the Indian Empire is lost to us for ever. Try the system upon Ireland, and the result will be empty schools, and universal ignorance and disaffection. Try the system upon Scotland, and Scottish loyalty will be numbered with the things that are no more.

I believe the true solution of the difficulty to be, that every government should provide for the education of the masses irrespective of differences in religious opinion. Every state may have a state religion, and every state religion may be represented by an established church. If the churches did their duty honestly and boldly, the religious instruction of

every member of the community would be amply provided for without the smallest entrenchment upon the secular province. When government has erected an established church, government has performed its duty so far as religious instruction is concerned. The only duty that remains for the State is to provide for the secular education of its subjects. The duty that remains for the Church is to fulfil its lofty ideal by showing us that it is a living, working, thinking church, bound by the most sacred obligations to bring all, by means of rational persuasion, within its fold ; not to pursue the unnatural course of making conversion the condition of education ; but to accept the education afforded by the State as the necessary condition of a rational acceptance of its doctrines. It is then the fault of the Church, and not by any means the fault of the State, if the religious instruction of the people is neglected.

THE END.

# WORKS OF GEORGE FRANCIS ARMSTRONG.

## POEMS: LYRICAL AND DRAMATIC.

A New Edition. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, price 6s.

"Mr. G. F. Armstrong, whose genuine poetical abilities have still, we hope, to bear good and lasting fruit, has reissued his 'Poems, Lyrical and Dramatic,' for the most part early works, full of the exuberant promise and vitality of youth."—*Guardian*.

"Son livre le fait connaître pour un esprit sincère, profondément religieux, mais n'accordant sa confiance à aucune des églises ou des sectes de son pays, pour un cœur aimant qui s'épanchait dans des vers plutôt tendres que passionnés."—*Revue des Deux Mondes*.

## UGONE: A TRAGEDY.

A New Edition. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, price 6s.

"We notice with pleasure a new edition of this tragedy, which has been vigorously conceived, and written with sustained spirit and elegance . . . . The explanations in the closing scene are spontaneous and thoroughly animated, the circumstances have been judiciously prepared, and the spectacle becomes absorbing and magnificent."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

"A composition of really remarkable performance and of genuine promise."—*Saturday Review*.

## KING SAUL.

### (THE TRAGEDY OF ISRAEL, PART I.)

Fcap. 8vo., cloth, price 5s.

"The violent, but always unsuccessful, efforts of remorse to find oblivion in a deliberate attitude of defiance; the sense of the hollowness of kingship when severed from the reality of influence; and the King's still eager love of his people; though blurred always by despair, and sometimes by the brute impulse of impotent jealousy against the foredestined successor; have been taken up one after another in Mr. Armstrong's drama in a really masterly manner. . . . . We can scarcely find a higher commendation for the tragedy of *King Saul* than to say that, in choosing his subject, its author did not overtax his legitimate strength."

*Saturday Review*.

"It is a genuine work of the imagination, and the imaginative power displayed in it is as remarkable for the altitude it reaches as for the wide range it commands."—*Examiner*.



## KING DAVID.

### (THE TRAGEDY OF ISRAEL, PART II.)

Fcap. 8vo., cloth, price 6s.

"The material is thoroughly well wrought; each verse is finished with unflinching strength. There is no flickering of the intellectual flame . . . . . His conceptions of character are sound and firmly sustained."

*Examiner.*

"There can be no doubt as to the imaginative vigour, and persistent intellectual power with which Mr. Armstrong pursues his task . . . . . The sequence of events sweeps along in his pages with a grand impressive roll, having the deep music of passion and imagination for an appropriate accompaniment."—*Guardian*.

"Mr. Armstrong's right to be numbered among our poets is conceded."

*Sunday Times.*

"The author of *Ugone* and *King Saul* has already been recognized as a poet of high and distinct merit."—*Hour*.

## KING SOLOMON.

### (THE TRAGEDY OF ISRAEL, PART III.)

Fcap. 8vo., cloth, price 6s.

"There can be no doubt that this is in various ways a production displaying genuine power and original thought . . . . . A vivid dramatic poem, dealing with various problems of human passion, suffering, and trial. The language and often the ideas, are entirely modern, but this only helps to bring out the essential humanity of the men before us, and the reality of their flesh and blood."—*Saturday Review*.

"To the energy of purpose necessary to approach and grapple with a theme so gigantic, there has been joined a patience in execution which has allowed of no slovenly work to the best of its judgment; no mean skill in the mechanism of verse; a fancy fertile in conceptions which not seldom reach grandeur; and a remarkable descriptive faculty . . . . . *King Solomon* is in the portraiture of the hero the best of the three plays."

*Academy.*

"Quite uncommon mastery of language and much melody of versification distinguish it ['The Tragedy of Israel']. For energy of rhetoric, for the really poetical beauty of the lyrical portions of it, for the richness of imagery which adorns, even over-adorns it throughout, it takes high rank among the poems of the present day."—*Spectator*.

"We must designate the attested powers of the poet as extraordinarily great—so elevated is his imagination; so full of idealism his representation of powerful emotions; and, finally, so perfectly beautiful his language." *Magazin für die Literatur des Auslandes* (Berlin).

"Poète comme son frère Edmund, mort il y a quelques années, M. G. F. Armstrong s'était fait connaître par un recueil de *Poèmes lyriques et dramatiques* et par une tragédie d'*Ugone*, quand il donna *le Roi Saül*, qui a justement augmenté sa réputation, accrue encore par *le Roi David* et *le Roi Salomon*."—*Polybiblion* (Paris).

"As contributions to modern classics—these works are destined to hold high rank and be universally admired."—*Boston (U. S.) Commonwealth*.

"Scarcely any poems have obtained such a wide critical acceptance."

*Hour.*

---

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.





PR 4007 .A760 E8 C.1  
Essays and sketches of Edmund  
Stanford University Libraries



3 6105 034 240 478

| DATE DUE |  |  |  |
|----------|--|--|--|
|          |  |  |  |
|          |  |  |  |
|          |  |  |  |
|          |  |  |  |
|          |  |  |  |
|          |  |  |  |
|          |  |  |  |
|          |  |  |  |
|          |  |  |  |
|          |  |  |  |
|          |  |  |  |
|          |  |  |  |
|          |  |  |  |
|          |  |  |  |

STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES  
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-6004

